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THE NEW ANTIGONE

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THE NEW ANTIGONE

A Romance

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Προβᾶσ' ἐπ' ἔσχατον θράσους
ὑψηλὸν ἐς Δίκας βάθρον
προσέπεσες, ὦ τέκνον, πολύ·
πατρῷον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἄθλον.
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VOL. I

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES,

FINISHED ON HER BIRTHDAY,

ARE DEDICATED TO

MY SISTER

30th January 1887.

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PART I

THE HOUSE OF TRELINGHAM

CHAPTER I

A JOURNEY TOWARDS THE SUNSET

THE train had been rushing westward for hours, and the genius of the steam-kettle who drove it along was plainly intent neither on the landscapes that in momentary glimpses might be seen from the carriage-windows, nor on the babble of conversation which, in fitful gusts, rose and fell among the company it was bearing to their several destinies. All that the scientific, yet not time-keeping, demon cared for was to reach his last station by the shortest route. Nevertheless, glimpses of scenery caught in this way from the train have an extraordinary fascination, sometimes giving a whole country-side in one vivid sheet of lightning, where every line is fixed as in a daguerreotype and can never be forgotten. And what confessional or ear of Dionysius can gather up such confidences as may be heard among chance people in railway travelling? It would seem that the silent Briton, fenced round about with reserve as with Arctic icebergs, fancies himself stranded on a desert island with the companion who has got into his compartment at Basingstoke or Rugby. Certain it is that he is apt, after exhibiting the most profound indifference for his *vis-à-vis*, to unbosom himself under such circumstances, as Robinson Crusoe

would have done to the first Englishman landing on Juan Fernandez. And, as it fell out, the spirit of the steam, or any other, might have witnessed a scene of this kind, had he crept into a certain first-class carriage and lain snug in a corner thereof, watching until a couple of young men who were its occupants should awake from their slumbers.

Each had taken his ticket at the same ticket-office; each had made for the same compartment, and had established himself in a corner diagonally as regarded the other. Each had veiled his features behind a newspaper, and tried his best to imagine that the impudent fellow who shared his solitude did not exist. And each hoped to see the other take himself off when the train stopped. But in vain; it was not to be. One station after another was left behind; the country grew more countrified; the towns became of less account; the clouds began to move slowly towards the west, as though summoned to attend the last moments of a dying king who would shroud his head in their splendours; the hours drew out to twice their length, as they will do in travelling, and still no sign appeared of these unwilling companions parting from one another. When they had studied their fill of the daily wisdom purchased at the London bookstall, each glared out of his window, noted what seemed notable along the line, fixed his eyes steadily —upon nothing, and at last, drawing back his head, fell into uneasy sleep. And the train rushed on. Its genius might have fallen asleep too, and have been travelling in his dreams, for all the tokens of life in this compartment. Then the sun's light came more slanting, and the train seemed to be moving ever more and more into its pathway, as if in time it would leave the solid earth behind and on its wings of white vapour float into the sunset and be there transfigured among the cloud-splendours. And as the light filled their compartment, both young men woke up. That one of them who had been sitting by the dark windows of the carriage, away from the sun, changed his corner, and came and sat opposite the other. He was desirous, apparently, of catching a glimpse of the sea which for more than an hour the train had been nearing, as the dull thunder of waves on a shingly beach, somewhere below,

had testified. Being in such close neighbourhood, with only a foot or so of space between them, it would have been incumbent on any except British railway-travellers to exchange some civil speeches. Perhaps that may have been the reason why one of them, who did not look entirely English, at last, after some hesitation, opened his lips and said (but still with the haughty indifference which young Englishmen assume towards those to whom they have not been introduced), 'Is the next station Yalden?'

'No; the next but one,' answered his *vis-à-vis*, sinking thereupon into stony or, as a Greek might express it, adamantine silence.

The next station appeared, paused a moment, vanished, and a reach of wild country came flying at the carriage-windows. The first speaker looked at his watch, and began again. 'The train is due at Yalden now,' he said; 'we are late.'

'Yes,' said the other, 'nearly half an hour late; trains always are on this part of the line.'

The ice was broken, or rather, part of the iceberg gave way. A remark about Bradshaw, another to the effect that the tide was coming in, a third suggesting that it would be a stormy night to judge by the clouds, led to the first speaker's asking, as he looked once more out of the carriage-window, 'Do you know whether Trelingham Court is far from Yalden?' Now was the time for any hidden, curiosity-loving sprite in the down train to prick up his ears and listen.

'Trelingham Court?' said the other in an inquiring tone. 'Why, about six miles if one is a stranger; under six, a good deal, taking the short cut by St. Mirian.'

And as he looked across at his companion with more attention than before an idea seemed to strike him as possible, which in a moment or two must have grown from possible to probable, for he said:

'Excuse me, sir, perhaps you are going to Trelingham.'

'Yes,' answered the other; 'that is my journey's end.'

'And mine,' said his questioner. 'How very odd!' He added, after a pause, and with considerable diffidence, 'I am very likely going to ask an absurd question, but I happened to see a portrait in this year's Academy of which

you strongly remind me, and my cousin pointed it out as——'

The first speaker interrupted him courteously. 'My name,' he said, 'is Rupert Glanville, and a portrait of me there certainly was, hung rather too near the sky-line, on those much-enduring walls. But you must have observed it closely to see a likeness between it and a chance traveller on the railway.'

'I was about to remark,' said the other, 'that my cousin pointed it out as that of the artist who was coming down to Trelingham to paint the Great Hall. Else, I know so little of art matters that I should hardly have remembered it.'

'Your cousin said so, did he?' asked Mr. Glanville with an accent of surprise. 'I thought no one——'

'It was not he,' said the other, laughing; 'it was she. Not my cousin, Lord Trelingham, but his daughter, Lady May, who was inspecting the pictures that afternoon with other young ladies, and made some of us fellows walk in her train.'

'Ah,' said Mr. Glanville, 'I have never met Lady May Davenant; and I thought, I imagined, that only Lord Trelingham knew what was proposed. Until I have seen the Great Hall, and heard his plans more in detail, I cannot tell whether anything will come of it, so far as I am concerned. That is why I am now on my way to Trelingham Court.'

'Oh,' said the Earl's cousin, or Lady May's cousin,—but I think Lady May's cousin sounds the prettier, the more sentimental, as introducing this young gentleman (he seemed about twenty), who should of course, were mine not a story of real life, be our first or second lover, and devoted to the Earl's daughter,—'my cousin made no secret of it, and I suppose her father made none. And though I am such an ignoramus that I don't know one style of painting from another, I remembered your portrait all the more because a great deal was said about your *manner*—isn't that the word? If I understood Lady May, it is quite unlike what they supposed Lord Trelingham would have chosen. They were all loud in its praise; but they seemed to agree, or all except Lady May, that you,—

that, in short, there was a deal of Paganism in your pictures. Is that so?'

'Quite, I should fancy,' said Mr. Glanville, much amused at the courteous bluntness, or blunt courtesy, of this young man, to whom painting was clearly a far-off mystery, like Chinese chess. 'Paganism would be the word for it in the Earl's *entourage*. For he himself is by no means a pagan.'

'I should think *not*,' said the other emphatically; 'not at all a Pagan, unless Ritualists are Pagans. But that was the wonder. For, of course, he will not want paintings all round him in which he cannot believe.'

'That is just it,' replied Mr. Glanville; 'you have hit the nail on the head. Lord Trelingham does not want pictures in which he cannot believe. He is no artist; but of all the men I have come across he has the finest sense of what is genuine art and what is mere make-up and pretence. He went to certain well-known masters and asked them how they would paint the Epic of King Arthur; and they designed, every man of them, an impossible boudoir idyll, a medieval dream, in the style of Tennyson. He looked round for some one that professed, at all events, to paint realities; and I know how astonished he was on finding the "Paganism" of my canvases more real than the "dim rich" Christianity of Launcelot and Guinevere in the Laureate's blank verse. So we are going to make trial whether I can paint the Arthurian history as it must have happened, if it happened at all.'

To this learned speech the Earl's cousin made no reply, perhaps because he did not understand it. About epics, classical or medieval, Homeric or Arthurian, he never had troubled himself since he left school; and there he cared only for the fighting in the Iliad, in which he would have liked to join. Poetry meant less to him even than painting; but he did not lack brains, and he said by and by:

'Lord Trelingham is fond of art, but I always fancied he mixed it up with religion. He is ever so High Church, and such a Tory that I heard him say once there were none left but himself and Lord Hallamshire. Shall you

put all that into your King Arthur? For unless you do, he will not know what to make of it.'

'I may,' said Mr. Glanville; 'who knows?' And he laughed as if the suggestion had roused his fancy. 'King Arthur was certainly High Church, and the Round Table a brotherhood of Tory knights. But Lord Trelingham is many things besides a Ritualist. He is an excellent art-critic; and when he came to my studio he talked much of colouring and gradation of tone, without a syllable of religion.'

'He is certainly, as you remark,' said the other, 'not one man, but several—half a dozen, perhaps. For instance, when you see him at home, you will take him by his dress for—what do you think?' Mr. Glanville could not say.

'No, of course, no one could guess. But with his long velvet coat reaching below his knees, his skull-cap, and flowing white beard, he might very well pass in a play for some sort of astrologer. And the curious thing, as you will find, is that he has been given that way, and practises now occasionally.'

'Astrology and Ritualism,—a strange mixture!' said Mr. Glanville; 'how does he reconcile them?'

'Beyond me to say,' replied the Earl's cousin; 'but he does. He will probably draw your horoscope if you can tell him the day, hour, and minute when you were born, and whether the room in which you first saw the light, as he calls it, looked east or west.'

Mr. Glanville's lip curled scornfully. 'He will not draw my horoscope,' he said; 'has he drawn yours?'

'I believe so,' answered the other; 'but what is to befall the unlucky Tom Davenant nobody knows, for it is apparently something too terrible, and my cousin has locked up the prediction and never speaks of it.'

A pity if anything should befall him, let me tell the reader, for Tom Davenant, as he sat there with the fun breaking out at the corners of his mouth, was a marvellously good-looking fellow, well-made in every limb, tall and broad-shouldered, with a face so clear and open that to see him was to like him. The artist, since their conversation

began, had been scanning with his practised eye the almost too delicate features of this young English Apollo, meaning hereafter to translate him into his own realm of paganism, putting a little more mind into the great blue eyes (there was enough in the mobile lips), and surrounding him with the graceful Hellenic forms to which, in spite of his modern garb, he was manifestly akin.

'An Apollo,' said Mr. Glanville to himself, 'much exercised at the silver bow—that is to say, in slaying birds and beasts, fox-hunting and hare-hunting, but destitute of lute and learning, and very shy of the Muses.' And he went on with his mental portraiture.

I wonder what Tom Davenant would have made of these reflections had his companion uttered them. He was not conscious in the least of the beauty Nature had given him, and thought fishing, hunting, and boating were the only business a man had in life, with smoking for a relaxation. He was a perfectly beautiful, healthy, guileless, and good-tempered youth, fond of every beast he did not kill. But as for Apollo and his lute, he preferred a good fowling-piece to all the lutes in the world. And he was not exactly shy of the Muses, if Mr. Glanville meant thereby feminine society; but he thought them uninteresting. Whether he cared for Lady May the uneven tenor of this chronicle must show.

The train was stopping at Yalden, a steep, scrambling, irregular village that came stumbling down the red sandstone cliff as though it had meant, in a frenzied or heroic mood, to plunge straight into the sea, but had been pulled up at the last moment and was now unable to get back again. But the sea dealt kindly with it, not suffering trees to grow indeed, and often sending great sheets of spray high up into its face, yet tempering the air and encouraging the fuchsias and rhododendrons to flourish plenteously in the open, so that when our travellers arrived the village was all colour, fragrance, and freshness, its houses embowered in the exquisite long creeping plants which knew how to shield themselves from the sea-wind, and the red sandstone glowing, as the rays of sunset kindled it, like a heavy purple cloak flung carelessly on the ground. The waters were

restless under a freshening breeze, thin lines of foam stretching themselves along and curling back as they touched the sands, which at this point make a shelly, narrow, and undulating beach. A little way beyond the village, where the sandstone yielded to some harder and more primitive rock, might be seen a tiny creek hemmed in by huge cliffs, under which, brawling and defiant, rushed one of those short, swift rivers that delight in quarrelling with every stone they meet and fall into the sea all foam and trouble. It was the Yale, from which Yalden takes its name; and its brief journey began on the moor above. There, too, the railway paused, shareholders not being in love with steep gradients and preferring to economise their resources, while the one or two small inns of Yalden added to theirs by sending flys to meet passengers on alighting.

Mr. Tom Davenant had telegraphed that he might be looked for by such a train, and as he and Mr. Glanville leaped on the platform they saw the Earl's brougham awaiting them. With windows down and the carriage going at a good pace over the moor, it was a pleasant evening drive; though Tom Davenant would have preferred riding, which was to him, as to an Usbeg Tartar, the natural way of getting from one place to another. He had talked a great deal for him, being of a silent and self-contained disposition, in the last half-hour of their journey; and he was not sorry that Mr. Glanville left him to his thoughts as they drove along. The artist, indeed, was no more inclined to speak than the hunting-man by his side. He was all eye, gazing out upon the rolling moor which unfolded itself before them, now up, now down, seemingly boundless, except in one direction where the sky bent over it to the western waters, fringing it in this light with a golden line that never wavered, while on the wide waste there lay a stillness, intensified by the dying murmur of the sea they were leaving behind. And here again the red sandstone glowed purple, the heather looked glorious as the rain of sunshine fell upon it, the clouds grew more solemn and appeared to be drawing together, trailing after them fiery streamers, and leaving wide spaces of tender pale green vapour, which would melt later on into the dark

blue of the evening sky and make room for the stars. Strange, too, it was to see the lonely boulders, each like a ghost standing in his place on the moor, brought thither in the long past time when a river of ice travelled over it, one knows not how, one cannot reckon when, grinding its slow way onward till it slipped into the ocean, leaving these tokens that once it had been. There were dips full of verdure and flowering shrubs, reaches of bare sand, and, as the road bent down and away from the sea, a dark copse or two, sheltered, as on a lee shore, by the higher ground, to whose sides they clung timorously. As the carriage turned a steep corner and began to ascend again, Glanville perceived that they were entering a narrow valley, which widened as it went up to the moor by easy steps, and was clothed to the right with underwood which the sun had now ceased to illuminate, while to the left all was heath and furze. They were entering the Park. They passed one gate and then another; above the trees, which here found no difficulty in growing, came out the turrets of a great house. A few more minutes brought the carriage to the broad gravel sweep of a terrace facing south-west, along which ran the massive undecorated front of Trelingham Court; and the Earl himself, who was walking to and fro as if in expectation of his guests, came forward to meet them. He gave each a hand, and bade the artist welcome.

Lord Trelingham certainly bore out his cousin's half-mocking description of him as 'an astrologer in a play'; neither white beard, nor velvet gown, nor skull-cap was wanting. He wore on his little finger an amethyst inscribed with Solomon's seal; and his wrinkled, tawny face, dim eyes, and lean, tremulous figure heightened the effect, making him altogether like a man who had stepped down out of a picture and was taking his evening walk, regardless of the fact that he had been buried and his portrait counted among the family heirlooms for a couple of centuries. He was not so tall as his young cousin, but had an air of dignity which softened to the utmost good-nature when the shyness or embarrassment of others called it forth. As he stood on the terrace, enjoying the prospect and pointing

out the way they had come to Glanville, the artist could not help admiring the beautiful old man, and asking himself whether immense wealth and high rank always did spoil human goodness, as is commonly said. Here was an unspoiled rich man, one of the great ones of the earth, yet so gentle and unaffected that to live with him would imply neither time-serving nor ceremonious posture-making. It might, however, involve superstitious practices, if the Earl were bent on winning disciples to astrology. And Glanville, who had a lively fancy, began to smile at a Burke's Peerage recorded in the stars.

They went in, passing through the Great Hall which was to be the scene of Glanville's achievements. It was a magnificent room, opening straight on the terrace, and designed for the solemn banquets of former days, when a man feasted his tenants and neighbours at the same tables and counted his guests by the hundred. It was lighted from above, but at the farther end an immense window reaching from floor to ceiling gave a view of the inner court, with its lawn and fountain now in shadow, and a screen of dark foliage, the beginning of an extensive plantation. Trelingham Court was built in collegiate fashion, sheltering its woods from the sea, and sheltered by them in turn from the north-east. 'In half an hour,' said the Earl, 'we shall dine, but in a less formal dining-room;' and he left Glanville in the butler's charge. That stately gentleman, it is needless to observe, was, though perfectly well-bred, much more ceremonious than his master. He perpetuated in a lower sphere what one has heard of the manners of *la vieille cour*, that Versailles the graces of which must have been hopelessly lost during the French Revolution but for such fortunate survivals. In this dignified way Glanville was shown to an apartment overlooking the front terrace, and giving views of the broken and rock-strewn line of coast, beyond which the waters spread out in a golden sheet. The sun was sinking, clear and ruddy, on their extreme edge. It was an hour to muse or write verses rather than to dine. But the great British evening sacrifice called for its votary, and Glanville proceeded to attire himself in the garb of blackness appropriate thereto.

CHAPTER II

SIBYLLINE MUSIC

On entering the drawing-room he found some ten or twelve persons, of whom he knew none but his host, standing about in the mournful way which seems to have been prescribed by a Plutonian master of ceremonies for the minutes preceding dinner. Every one was hungry, and even the ladies looked pensive or distracted, for the hour was late. Glanville had no gift of taking in a company at a glance; he was led forward blindly, introduced to Lady May Davenant, who presided over her father's household (for the Earl was a widower), and whose face, as she was standing with her back to the light, he could scarcely see, —bowed submissively to another lady whose name he did not catch, but to whom he offered his arm with the readiness required of him, dinner being that instant announced; and moved on to the dining-room not unwillingly, for all the romantic scene of lights upon the sea which curtains now shut out and the flowers and subdued lamps of a dinner-table replaced.

Dazzled though he often was on coming into a room, Glanville had quick eyes and ears. When, in Homeric phrase, his mind was getting the better of its desire of meat and drink,—in other words, when an excellent soup and a glass of old sherry left him philosophically calm and capable of observation,—he looked across the ferns and surveyed the assembled guests at his leisure. Mr. Tom Davenant, who had followed him into the drawing-room, was now sitting opposite by the side of a clerical-looking lady whose partner in life was not far to seek; for the only clergyman

present (he had said grace, but of course Glanville did not hear him) at that moment drew all eyes by remarking in a cheerful voice to the Earl that his two volumes of the *Life of King Arthur* would be out to-morrow. Glanville, a little alarmed at the announcement, earnestly scrutinised the speaker's countenance. It was a bright, good-humoured face, betokening no malice, and made venerable by the crown of white hair which set off a noble-looking head. Lord Trelingham, however, replied that Mr. Truscombe's work could not have appeared at a better time; it would no doubt help Mr. Glanville to more vividly reproduce the local colouring which their frescoes in the Great Hall would demand. Mr. Truscombe was the clergyman of the parish, expressly invited to meet the artist on the ground of his being learned beyond all others in British antiquities, and already famous by his great book on the holy wells of Cornwall and Cumbria. Glanville received this piece of news with a polite air, but inwardly began to chafe at the appearance of King Arthur and British antiquities during dinner. No one could be more sensitive, or less given to the jargon of his trade than he. So sensitive, indeed, was the man, that he had not yet overcome his vexation on hearing from Tom Davenant that the Earl had spoken of him as 'the artist who was to paint the Great Hall.' He did not know that he should paint it. One thing was certain: if he undertook the design he must be left to his own inspirations, or it would be a failure. He had hoped to come down as an invited guest with no preliminary flourish of trumpets, to meditate upon the work in solitude, alone with Art, his unseen mistress; and here was a whole dinner-table ready perhaps to ask him, 'What were his ideas?' or, worse still, to bring out their own by way of suggestion. Glanville was a fiery, shy, unmanageable spirit, quite beyond Lord Trelingham's comprehension. The Earl could not have dreamt what thoughts were passing through his mind at the mention of Mr. Truscombe's *King Arthur* and the short discussion to which it gave rise. For an instant the design which had brought Glanville from London was in danger. He had more than once started at the shadow of interference

and flung his work aside. Could he but have done so now! Innocent Mr. Truscombe would then have proved himself the *Deus ex machina*, the divine agency that cuts an otherwise insoluble knot and gives the tragic story a happy ending,—or rather, in this case, the tragedy would never have begun. But no, the personages of the play, on the very point of falling asunder and going out by their several exits, were drawn once more by invisible threads into a fated group. Glanville mastered, though not without an effort, the spasm of rage that had seized upon him. At clever evasions he was skilful; and, while he took care that there should be no talk of King Arthur that evening, so far as he was concerned, only a very keen observer would have known how angry the allusion had made him. It was an evil omen. Instead of the 'auspicious bird' with which he had hoped to begin, he felt as if a raven or other ill-boding visitant were flapping its wings over the painted scene in which already his imagination was roving.

Conversation at the Earl's end of the table floated to a fresh topic. Another voice struck in, that of Lord Hallamshire, one of his oldest friends, and, like himself, devoted to the interests of the catholicising party in the Church of England. Lord Hallamshire presided at meetings innumerable for the adoption, defence, or further strengthening of the eastward position; visited the confessors of the faith in prison; subscribed handsomely to missionary efforts for explaining to the natives of the Andaman and neighbouring islands the exact difference between a cope and a chasuble; and was a large, good, dull man, with heavy brows and an immovable countenance. His enormous nose, as I have often observed in persons of Lord Hallamshire's type, indicated solidity rather than sagacity, and a firm grasp of the prosaic side of things. He was now, after some floundering about, holding straight on in an account of what had been accomplished by the Guild of St. Austell to get the orders of the English Church fully recognised by their Eastern brethren. Their success with the Catholicus of Babylon, so far, had been all they could wish.

'The Catholicus of Babylon!' said Glanville, who had

recovered his good-humour; 'is that the same as the Pope of Rome?'

Tom Davenant looked at the Earl and broke into a very pleasant smile. But Lord Trelingham, who had no sense of the ludicrous, replied with much gravity, 'The same as the Pope of Rome! Oh dear, no! I see your mistake, which was quite natural. It is true that St. Peter dates an epistle from Babylon which our brethren of the Western Obedience interpret as Rome. But the Catholicus is independent of Rome, like our own archbishop. He sits in the place of St. ——' He hesitated, trying to remember the name.

'St. Daniel?' inquired Tom Davenant, to the Earl's consternation, who became yet more confused and quite at a loss. The young man continued innocently, 'I know I learnt some poetry at school about Babylon where Daniel comes in as a sort of bishop. It began—

'"Belshazzar gave a feast at Babylon in his hall."'

'Be quiet, Tom,' said Lady May, from the end of the table. 'You might at least quote accurately. You have spoilt the rhythm of the verse.' Then, turning to her father, 'St. Paphnutius is the name,' she said.

Glanville, who had not observed Lady May hitherto, looked at her in amazement. It was rude, but how could he help it? Was she an embodied dictionary of ecclesiastical worthies,—a blue-stocking, thus to hand her father a name like Paphnutius as unconcerned and gracefully as though it were a cup of tea? What was her age? She seemed six or seven-and-twenty; yes, it was the period when ladies began to do these things. He disliked learned women; they seemed to him unfeminine, the most beautiful thing in the world spoilt. And so he looked too steadfastly at Lady May. She might have noticed, had not the younger lady whom Glanville had taken into dinner, and who had been hitherto very quiet, added to the bizarre effect of Daniel and Belshazzar by remarking, 'My dear May, I met this very Catholicus of Babylon, who has said such civil things of your church, last week in Paris, at Madame de Mont-Bazeille's. An extraordinarily handsome

man, of about thirty-six. He has a face like a statue, and the darkest of dark eyes. But his beard was not so long as I expected. His costume was splendid,—a kind of Oriental satin, of which even Worth does not know the name, for I asked him. And charmingly made up with a ruche, you know, of strange old lace. I daresay it cost a fortune. Monseigneur Sidarlik they called him.'

'That is the name,' said Lord Hallamshire; 'it is odd you should have met him in Paris. His letter to the Gufid was dated Constantinople.'

'Oh, he came on account of the slave-trade,' said the lady. 'I heard why, but it has gone out of my-head.'

'Doubtless,' said Lord Trelingham in his gentle voice, 'it was to ask the French Government whether they could not stop the importation of slaves into Syria. I hope he succeeded in his benevolent mission.'

'I remember now,' said the young lady; 'no, it was very amusing. Monseigneur Sidarlik came to consult a great firm in Paris which gives young girls a *dot*,—what are they called? Ah, yes, the *Prix Montyon de l'Orient;* they send them to the East, and by way of Armenia to Russia, where they marry into the households of our great nobles. The Catholicus is their agent in his part of the world; and the number exported had fallen off, and he came to make fresh arrangements. We were all so much amused at the idea of going to Asia for a husband.'

Lord Trelingham looked aghast. 'My dear Countess,' he said, 'you must be mistaken. This is dreadful. The Catholicus would never engage in such proceedings; he is perfectly orthodox. You must have heard the wrong story.'

Lord Hallamshire thought so too. The Countess shrugged her shoulders and did not argue the point; but she held her own opinion. Whether, indeed, she were maligning a blameless prelate, or casting a powerful side-light on the manners and customs of Babylonian Christians, in any case, the subject became too difficult to dwell upon. Lady May inquired of Tom Davenant what he had been doing. He bethought himself of the remarkable meeting with Glanville, and drew the artist into the conver-

sation; and the Earl's daughter, though her sentences were brief, and she guided their talk rather than shared in it, kept them off the dangerous themes of painting and religion. Her expression, while she thus fulfilled the duties of her place, was somewhat fatigued. She wore an air of listlessness. But her lips were proud and firm; and Glanville found himself comparing her voice to the sound of a harp. It was a rich contralto, full of depth and resonance, which gave the commonest words a feeling. What she spoke was not trivial, but it could not be intimate, uttered across a dining-table; yet there was something,—there was a story to make out, Glanville fancied, though he could not have said why. If she were a blue-stocking, then blue-stockings might be wonderfully impressive. Lady May rose, and the gentlemen fell into politics when they were left to themselves. But Glanville sat considering. He was haunted by the look and still more by the voice of his hostess.

She was not exactly beautiful—or was she? The features were regular, the eyes dark and full; cheek and throat of a ruddy brown, and hair as black as night. There was intelligence in the forehead, and a proud decision in her movements. Yet in those dark eyes was a far-off look, uncertain, questioning, in the closed lips a habit of self-repression. Could it be that she was unhappy? Passionate she seemed by temperament, inclining to despise those about her. And the voice again,—'fire and sweetness,' he said to himself. 'Am I falling in love?' he concluded, with an inward smile. But he was glad when the Earl invited them to join the ladies. He wanted to hear the harp-like tones, to study the character a little more.

He was fortunate. The windows of the drawing-room opened on the terrace; and a mild evening, with the moon making daylight all over the land and shimmering softly out at sea, drew them into the open air. It was not a formal party. Except Glanville, they were all old acquaintance; and Mr. and Mrs. Truscombe were, that night, staying like the rest at Trelingham. Tom Davenant went away to smoke with the clergyman; the others fell into little groups; and Lady May, in her quality of hostess,

came to Mr. Glanville where he stood with the Earl, and inquired whether he found his room comfortable. Her father turned to her, 'Thank you so much, my dear,' he said, 'for helping me to the name of St. Paphnutius. What a wonderful memory you have! I cannot remember names at all, and it gets one into such difficulties when one has to make a speech. But you never forget them.'

'It is easier,' said Lady May gently, 'to remember a name for you, papa, even if it is so out of the way as Paphnutius, than to see you in trouble over it.'

'So,' thought Glanville, 'she is not a church dictionary after all; she is only an affectionate daughter. I am glad of it.'

Just then Lord Trelingham was called away. The artist found himself alone with the lady, and was not a little surprised when, after a pause of a moment or two, she began, 'I fear Mr. Truscombe's new book will not be so agreeable to you as to the good man himself. It is a pity the publication should occur just when you are designing your plans for the Great Hall.'

Glanville could only say in some confusion, 'Really, I don't know. Why do you think so? Perhaps I did not show sufficient interest in the *Life of King Arthur*. I hope I was not in any way rude to Mr. Truscombe?'

'Oh no,' said Lady May; 'but there was something you did not like. My father is the most considerate of men, and admires art and artists. But he does not quite, I think, enter into the nature of their work; he does not know that inspiration is easily checked. He would fancy that you and Mr. Truscombe might, to some extent, combine your gifts in the decoration on which he has set his heart. But if I understand—perhaps I do not—the quality of your painting, I should think it impossible for you to do so. And I saw you were annoyed.'

'Well,' said Glanville, half ashamed of himself, 'I was. I may not have any inspiration to boast of; and no doubt Mr. Truscombe could teach me about the local colour. But I have always worked alone, and a partner would be unendurable to me. At least,' he continued, with a sort of

laugh, 'there is only one from whom I ask advice, and I seldom take it then.'

'He must be a man of genius,' said Lady May, not sarcastically, but as if she really thought so, 'for your painting has so much that is peculiar. I cannot imagine two minds, much less two pairs of hands, engaged in it.'

The artist felt astonished; had this lady studied his works closely? And why was her admiration so unreserved? He answered:

'My friend does not paint, but he knows all that has been done in painting, and everything else, I think. His advice, like that of the demon of Socrates, is chiefly negative. But it is the severest criticism; it takes down the studio walls and lets in the sun.'

'How very interesting!' cried Lady May; 'and is he known? Has he written anything?'

'Not a line. He is quite unknown, and will never be famous.'

They fell into silence. The Earl did not return. His daughter, as if absorbed in thought, looked out over the moor towards the distant sparkle of the waves. At last she said again, 'I wonder by what secret association it is that one thinks of rain and storm on such an evening as this? There is not a cloud to be seen.'

'And are you thinking of rain and storm?' said the artist.

'My imagination, I suppose I must call it, has been whispering to me of rain since we came on the terrace. Rain, coming down soft and steady, without a moment's pause; and the wind sighing through it, yet not blowing it away. It is strange that fancy should play these tricks. What is the association with a still landscape and radiant moon?'

'Contrast,' said Glanville; 'if we only knew why contrasts suggest each other, or why extremes meet. It is too deep a philosophy. But,' he went on slowly, 'there is something in your description of dark rain and wind that reminds me of I know not what musician; of some one who has put into his composition the voice of a long-continued, hopeless, weeping tempest, which sobs as though it would fain hush itself to sleep and could not.'

'Oh,' said Lady May, looking pleased, 'have you those feelings when you hear music? Do you translate it into figures of people moving, scenery, a sense that you are journeying on and on into unknown lands? I am constantly doing so.'

'And I, too,' replied he; 'but in my fanciful accompaniment there are always battles, mighty conflicts upon which the fate of the world seems to hang. Yes, it was a movement of Chopin's that you described, the very spirit of the rain moaning to itself secretly. Do you play? You may have the music.'

'Yes, I play,' said the lady, 'and there are many of Chopin's works in the drawing-room.' She turned and looked towards it. No lights were visible. The moon made a great square of silver where it shone in at the long windows opening to the ground.

'Then,' said Glanville, 'let me ask you to lay the rain-spirit with Chopin's nocturne. Let it weep itself to death on the piano.'

They walked towards the entrance; and as they were going in the Countess joined them. 'May,' she said, 'are you going to play? I want you to choose something that will take the moonlight out of my eyes. It has made me quite sleepy; and you must wake me up.' And she threw herself with the look of a tired child on a sofa near the open window.

'No, Karina,' replied Lady May; 'I shall send you to sleep now. You can wake up afterwards.' Glanville lit the wax candles in a pair of antique sconces which adorned the piano. Their feeble light left a deep shadow in the centre of the room. The moon looked in at the window; on the terrace outside nothing stirred. It was a lovely scene, hushed in silence; a world all fresh, calm, and beautiful, lifted up into night and poesy. The music, found as soon as looked for, was opened; Glanville stood by, to turn over the leaves; and Lady May, seating herself, struck the opening chords.

A few bars of sad, slow meditation, passing into lament, into longing, expectancy, disappointment; and then the sighing music seemed to gather the winds out of heaven,

and breathe all its sorrow into them and send them wandering abroad; and by and by, as the listener fancied, the skies had turned to rain, and all round were the falling showers, soft, steady, unbroken, as they had been pictured to him, every moment more sombre, blotting out the light. He seemed to hear the thunderous harmonies with their muffled, threatening roll; and fire came into the rain and struck through it; and the music grew shrill and weird, only to sink down again into faint monotonous sobbing. All at once, as it seemed coming to an end, there rose up as from the heart of the spent storm a human voice. With not unlike cadence and alternation of feeling, now proudly defiant, now self-accusing and full of regret, now fainting to utter weariness, it in some way repeated and intensified the passionate throbbings of Chopin's nocturne. Glanville started from his reverie. It was Lady May, improvising as in subtle reminiscence of the notes before her a chant in some southern tongue, that recalled the phases of the strange composition and put upon them a definite and heart-shaking meaning. The words were foreign to Glanville's ear; the accents of grief were not; and he stood motionless and embarrassed, like one who witnesses an outbreak of unsuspected wildness where all has hitherto been self-control. Lady May took no heed of him; she had forgotten his existence it seemed, and she went on shaping, as he could not doubt, her words to the music, until in the gentlest whisperings of resignation they became softer and softer, and at last went out in silence. It was like seeing the curtain fall on a tragedy.

'Oh, May,' cried the Countess, starting up, 'do you call that playing me to sleep? I am trembling all over. Where did you find that horrible piece of music? It was enough to curdle the blood in one's veins. Do you not think,' she said to the artist, 'that my cousin ought to be ashamed of frightening us so? I always say she has the voice of a Medea, or a stage-murderess. Don't you agree with me?'

Glanville muttered dissent or acquiescence, it would be impossible to say which, and could not take his eyes off Lady May. What sort of temperament was it that broke

loose in such perilous fashion? Was it only the genius of an actress, metamorphosed by fate into an earl's daughter, yet unable to subdue its natural longings and in this way satisfying them? A Medea! There could be no question of it. Were that untamable disposition to be roused, it would, while the frenzy lasted, be as little capable of pity as the tigress. And yet how tender had some passages of the improvisation sounded! He was at a loss; he could not tell what to think, except that in this high-born, delicately nurtured lady, there were unknown possibilities of good and evil.

She met his glance, and said, with a shade of diffidence, 'I learned to improvise when I was a child in Italy; and the pleasure of attempting it is sometimes irresistible. I hope you were not frightened, like my cousin Karina. She is terrified at everything.'

'Indeed, I am not,' said Karina petulantly; 'but I never could endure your grand style of singing—you know I adore you when you are quiet—since the day it made me fall off the steps at Genoa with surprise.'

'You were a silly child,' said Lady May, 'and you fell because you would look back and make faces at me, instead of seeing where you were going.' And they both laughed at the remembrance.

The rest of the party now came in; tea was handed by the orthodox ministers that accompanied the urn; Lady May did all that could be required at the hands of an attentive daughter and hostess; and Glanville struggled with an eerie feeling, as if he had seen her in the form of panther or tigress vanishing in the twilight, which had now succeeded on the moon's going down. When he retired to his room the feeling was still upon him, uncanny, disagreeable. He was not equal to much railway travelling, and fatigue soon sent him to sleep; but in the dim caverns of unconsciousness he seemed again and again to hear the falling rain, drip, drip, drip, and the murmurs, fierce or tender, of unassuaged passion, its endless long-drawn sighings, till he sank into depths of slumber where no voice came.

CHAPTER III

O RICHEST FORTUNE SOURLY CROST!

WHEN Glanville awoke, rather late next morning, and glanced out of his window, he found that his dream had not been all a dream. The early hours must have been stormy, for the air had a moist fragrance, and the foliage on every side seemed to be glistening with rain-drops. It would be an uncertain, changing day, rather dark than light, and not favourable for painting had he intended it. But the painting of the Great Hall was a long way off. He did not know whether his designs would meet with approval now that a professed (and probably ridiculous) antiquarian had come on the scene, to vex him with pedantic theories. He knew that Lord Trelingham had in these matters sound sense and judgment, however little of either he might display where the ritual of his creed was concerned. But he wanted no Mr. Truscombe to meddle; and he was resolved to keep him at arm's length. Whilst girding himself up with these and the like fierce thoughts of combat, he heard the breakfast-bell. It was, for a wonder, sweet-toned and musical; and, as he hurried down, he asked himself whether Lady May shared his intense dislike of gongs and other such barbaric instruments, and whether it was by her doing that the first morning-sounds were made pleasant to waking ears.

'You see,' he said, on wishing her good-morning, 'it was your prophetic sense that made you think of rain. It seems to have come in good earnest. Last night you must have heard it creeping over the sea.'

'Then I am a prophetess of evil,' said Lady May, 'for

there has not been such a storm this long while. I could not sleep for the uproar it made.'

'No,' said Tom Davenant, coming in, 'you are too nervous. But have you seen what has happened in the picture-gallery?'

The Earl followed him in haste. 'Oh, my dear May,' he said, 'such a misfortune! One of the windows in the picture-gallery blew in during the storm, and has been shattered to pieces. And the portrait of Lady Elizabeth is ruined—utterly ruined.'

Lord Trelingham never lost his temper at the worst of times. He would have gone to the scaffold with placidity in a good cause. But he looked exceedingly distressed now. 'Lady Elizabeth's portrait,' he murmured; 'I should not have cared for any other.'

'Oh, father, what a pity!' said May in a feeling voice. 'How sorry you will be! Did it fall, or what was the accident?'

His distress instantly called out her sympathy.

'Ruined, ruined!' her father reiterated. 'It was found this morning by Redwood lying across some chairs; the canvas not only scratched, but torn in several places, as if it had been paper, and the face of the portrait damaged worse than all the rest.'

'It must have been struck bodily from the wall,' said Tom Davenant, 'by the window frame when it was blown in. You never saw such confusion. Glass, woodwork, and canvas all in a heap together. But can nothing be done? Here is Mr. Glanville,' he went on, turning to the artist; 'he can tell us better than any one whether the harm can be put right.'

'I am at Lord Trelingham's service,' replied Glanville; 'shall I go at once and examine the picture?'

'You are very kind,' said the Earl, 'but you must not stir till you have breakfasted. There is no haste. The workmen have boarded up the window, and laid the picture in a safe place.'

There was a pause, during which, with subdued mien, the others addressed themselves to the duty of breakfasting. But the Earl could scarcely eat. 'We shall feel the loss

of it, May,' he said to his daughter in a husky voice. 'You will feel it.'

'Never mind me,' she answered; 'if nothing can be done I shall know how to bear it. But till Mr. Glanville has said restoration is impossible we ought to hope.'

'I have always thought the history was not concluded yet,' he murmured as if to himself.

Lady May caught the words. 'No history ever is,' she said.

The meal ended they moved to the picture-gallery, a long, narrow apartment on the first floor, running half the length of the terrace and with an entrance from the Great Hall. There were portraits on one side and windows on the other, with one in addition, that which had blown in during the storm, at the end. Exclamations broke from the lips of all when the havoc met their eyes. Fragments of the casement were lying on the polished floor, and mixed with them were great pieces of the heavy gilt moulding which had been shattered as the picture fell. The canvas, rent in more than one place, was set upright against the wall where the light fell full on it. When Glanville came up the others drew back. He went close to the picture, and his first exclamation was one of intense surprise. 'Why,' he cried, 'it is a Spanish altar-piece.'

'And a family portrait,' said the Earl. 'I will tell you,' he continued, with some hesitation, 'the history, or what I can of it, in time—but first examine its condition.'

Glanville stepped back to take a general view. The picture had been, undoubtedly, a masterpiece. He did not recognise the painter. But whoever he may have been, the school to which he belonged was manifest in the splendour of colouring, the bold design, and the deep religious earnestness that distinguished his composition. An altar-piece it was, as the Earl said,—an Assumption of the Virgin, but altogether unlike that monotonous repetition which fills our galleries from London to Naples, of a single feminine figure, with a moon beneath her feet shaped to resemble a bent bar of yellow soap, while winged baby-heads float round her on clouds of milliner's gauze. This picture combined the intense realism in the human forms which is characteristic of Spanish painting, with a transparent depth of air, a

vastness of prospect, a visionary glory in the distance; it seemed to draw out on every side as the artist gazed, and to lift him into the serene expanse through which the crowned Madonna rose towards heaven. She did not float on stationary clouds, as though her journey were ended; in the upward tending of the hands, in the sweeping forward of kingly messengers clad in glittering raiment and borne along upon eagles' wings, as if to herald her coming; in the whirlwind that seemed to take her waving garments, shot through with gold, as she was rapt away from this lower world, and to have caught up with her the attendant saints—a mighty company, in their pure white and crimson,—the sense of a quickening magnetic motion made itself felt, a rushing onward from sphere to sphere, while in the dim and starry distance portals shone half-opened, and round about them an awful faint-toned halo, like a cloud or a rainbow, hiding yet betokening the mystery that should be revealed. A glorious work of genius, but ruined. Yes, it was too true. That which must have been the perfection of the whole, its central glory—the ecstatic countenance of the Virgin—was defaced, was almost beyond recognition. The crown, with its jewelled light, could still be made out; the Madonna's features were gone.

'How very lovely!' said Glanville after a long pause. 'And how hopeless, I fear, to restore it! Even if the canvas could be joined and the colouring touched again, how could the most daring painter reproduce the head of the Virgin? There is nothing to copy from, and, judging by the rest of the figure, it must have been a peculiarly striking and original face.'

'Oh,' replied Lord Trelingham, 'we need be at no loss for an original, if the picture were otherwise capable of being restored. You have only to look at my daughter, Lady May, and you will see the face that has vanished.'

'Indeed! What an extraordinary thing!' cried the artist, turning from the picture to the lady, who stood blushing a little and with her eyes averted. 'You were saying that this altar-piece, for such it is, was likewise a family portrait. Did I hear the name of Lady Elizabeth? And it was like Lady May. Yes, I can just fancy, when I look very

closely into it, that there is left even now some shadow of resemblance. But how comes it, if I may ask? Do tell me the story whilst I go on with my examination. I cannot decide in a moment how this should be treated.'

There was a pause. The strangers who were present silently withdrew, leaving Lord Trelingham and his daughter with Mr. Glanville. These three sat down in front of the picture. 'You have a morning's work cut out for you, I should think,' said Tom Davenant. 'I will go round to the stables and come back in an hour or so, in case you want me.' And that unromantic youth, in whose ears the family chronicles had been repeated without their making the slightest impression on his memory, went off in his careless way with his hands in his pockets. His cousin looked after him and smiled a little sarcastically. Then she said, 'Well, papa, Mr. Glanville wants you to begin.' Her father seemed to be hesitating; and one might have fancied that he did not wish to pursue the subject. He said rather hastily, 'May, my dear, I am not very good at telling a story. I hardly know where to begin. The portrait came into my hands soon after my father's death, during the war of the Spanish succession.' He paused again, and with some agitation turned to the artist and laid his hand on his shoulder—'My dear Mr. Glanville,' he said, 'the associations this picture brings up to me are very painful; much more so than my daughter has reason to suspect. It is years since I spoke of them to any one. But in the short time of our acquaintance, which, however, should be reckoned since I came to know your paintings rather than from the day when I first called at your studio, I have come to think of you, if you will allow me to say so, as a friend. It is a sad story. I do not know the whole of it, but I will endeavour to repeat the chief incidents.'

Glanville was touched by the old man's simplicity and kindly tone. A soft light came into his eyes and his swarthy cheek grew ruddier as he murmured, 'You are very good to me, Lord Trelingham; I shall be happy to do all in my power.' And Lady May looked pleased, and eager to hear what was coming.

'I know,' she said to Glanville, 'the picture is like my father's sister, who died before I was born, and I am told it is like me. Colonel Valence brought it from Spain. I have often wondered why he gave it to the family when he has never been a friend of ours.'

'He was a dear friend of mine once,' replied her father. 'If he was not so later, perhaps I am in a measure to blame. But the past is past, and we can never recall it. Let me tell you the history in a few words, Mr. Glanville.'

He looked down, as if collecting his thoughts, and began in a low meditative voice, like one who watches the scenes of earlier days emerging into daylight, from the dim recesses where they hide, at his summoning.

'Edgar Valence and I were boys together; at home, where his father's little estate joined Trelingham Chase, as you may see in your ride this afternoon; at school, where he was my senior, and I counted it great good fortune that I was allowed to fag for him; and at Cambridge, where he was so distinguished and I of so little consequence that to be noticed by him was enough to make one proud. I thought him the finest fellow in the world; I loved and admired him and everything he did, and took him as my pattern hero. When he came down from the University my father welcomed him as much for his sake as for mine, and he was looked upon as one of ourselves. It was a happy time, and I thought it would last for ever. What a charm there was in his company, his bright fanciful talk, his quick reasoning, his decision and boldness of character! It enchanted us all; and my sister, Lady Alice Davenant, who was then a girl of seventeen, fell in love with him and he with her. They found it out one Long Vacation when he was at home, and they made no secret of it. My father, not unwillingly, gave his consent. Edgar Valence had nothing to call wealth, but he was of ancient descent, great talent, and unblemished reputation. He might be expected to win fame in the world if an opening were afforded him. My sister need not have despaired of being one day a Prime Minister's wife did she marry Edgar Valence. The engagement was not announced. Both the young people felt that a delay of some years was inevitable;

and Valence went back to pursue his studies at Cambridge.

'He and I were of the same college, though in very different sets, for my tastes led me in the direction of religious and ecclesiastical subjects—in short, towards the movement which, beginning at Oxford, had now affected Cambridge also; whilst his, I am sorry to say, had thrown him into society which, intellectual though it may have called itself, was frivolous and unbelieving. Valence was a young man of the world; he had never been a fervent Christian, and his studies and associations received that year an unfortunate bent, from which they never recovered. He became an open, a violent atheist. He said the most daring things, scoffed at the University authorities, took my own remonstrances by no means in the affectionate spirit which, I trust, dictated them, and saved himself from expulsion only by quitting Cambridge in a fit of passion and taking his name off the books. He returned, a changed and deteriorated man, to his father's house. A ruined man, alas! for it was well known why he had left the University; and in those days unbelief roused a universal horror and was visited with social excommunication. It is not so now,' said Lord Trelingham, interrupting himself.

'No,' said Glanville, his eyes falling as he answered; 'I suppose people are more used to it. But how did the change affect Lady Alice? Did she also give him up?'

'I will tell you,' resumed the Earl. 'When my father heard of this extraordinary and painful lapse in one towards whom he cherished the kindliest feelings, he sent for Valence and kept him at Trelingham nearly a week, doing his best by argument and exhortation to bring him into a more suitable frame of mind. Lady Alice, who knew of what had taken place, joined her entreaties to her father's; and her evident distress might have wrought upon a more decided temper than that of Edgar Valence, had pride for the moment not dulled his affection. It proved all in vain. During their reiterated and, as one may suppose, not very calm discussions, bitter words passed on both sides, and my father could never forgive the harsh, the blasphemous denial by Valence of all that Christians deem

sacred. My sister was no less horror-stricken; I cannot, however, think she was much to blame if an affection begun in childhood survived even this rude trial. When my father pointed out to Valence that while he continued an unbeliever his marriage with Lady Alice was out of the question, my sister silently acquiesced. She did not pretend that her feelings had altered; though she exhibited much self-control, she could not, in bidding her lover farewell, but whisper that she trusted the sky would clear again, and all be as before. Valence was free, she said, but she had given him her heart and could wait until he was worthy of it. "That will never be," replied my father with some anger. "Valence has no heart himself, and what brain he has will bring him to little good. If he cannot believe in God, you ought never to believe in *him*. He will only deceive you." Valence said nothing, looked for an instant into Lady Alice's face, bowed haughtily to my father, and turned from the door. Once, and once only, was he fated to cross that threshold again.

'The engagement had been secret, and the secret was not told. After a few days spent in moody seclusion under his father's roof, Edgar Valence disappeared; and when I ran down at the end of term to Trelingham no one could inform me what had become of him. I was more grieved than I cared to show, for my father's anger increased as time went on, and he forgot the pleasant ways of the boy to remember only that they had ended in unbelief and blasphemy. Lady Alice never spoke of Edgar, and I was afraid to touch that quivering string, for I saw that she suffered. Two years passed, and still no tidings came. We had settled down into our accustomed ways, except that my father was now an invalid, and Lady Alice spent most of her time in attending to his comfort. We were not unhappy together. I began to think my sister would never marry, for she went into no society, and declined more than one brilliant proposal of marriage without assigning any reason. I asked her one evening whether she thought Edgar Valence might return, whether she hoped it, and she replied: "I cannot tell; but when I gave him my promise it was once for all, and I will never break it."

I argued that her promise was no longer binding, that Edgar himself had tacitly released her, since he neither came, nor wrote, nor gave sign that he was living. I might have spared my pains; they were thrown away upon her loyal and passionate nature. Poor Alice!' said the Earl; 'you often remind me of her, May, with your enthusiasm and poetic outbursts, and the steady look in your eyes. There is a wonderful likeness between you and my sister when she was nineteen, in that troubled uncertain time which elapsed from the day of Edgar's disappearance till we heard of him again.'

'Yes,' replied Lady May, 'you did hear of him again, to be sure, and in a singular fashion. I know that part of the story.'

'You know some of it,' said Lord Trelingham. 'I will now tell you the rest, so far as I can unravel this tangled skein. On a certain morning, as we sat at breakfast and the letters were brought in, I noticed that a large one addressed to me seemed quite covered with travel-stains, and before I could think whose writing it was, the post-marks, which were very numerous, caught my attention, and I exclaimed, "A letter from Spain; who can have sent it?" Lady Alice looked up from her own correspondence; and as I held the letter out, she said with a kind of gasp, "It is from Edgar," and sank fainting to the ground. Great confusion ensued, as was natural; my sister did not recover at once, and when she did her distress was piteous to see. Joy and grief seemed to be struggling for the mastery; she put out her hand as if to grasp the letter, and then, whispering like one upon whom a great fear has fallen, she said to me, "Look at the date. It may be long ago, and perhaps, now, he is dead." I cannot express to you the passionate yearning she threw into her words, but I shall never forget them whilst I live. She sat trembling, and I broke the seal. It bore a date some twelve months back. My father, who had been silent until now, though painfully agitated, took the letter from my hand as I was on the point of reading it, and said, "Alice, I promise that you shall hear everything in this which you ought to know; but there may be—— in short, your brother and I will read it

first, and you meanwhile lie down in your own room and endeavour to compose yourself." She was led with tottering steps from the room. Even in my haste I was obliged to open the letter carefully, for it was written on the thinnest paper and would have borne very little more ill-usage. It began,—but stay,—I will bring you the strange document and you shall read its very words. I have kept it among my papers.' And as he spoke the Earl rose and left the picture-gallery. Lady May turned to the window and gazed out on the sky, which had in nothing abated of its sombreness; in the heavens was a wild and shifting dance of clouds, directed, as it would seem, by an inconstant breeze, and upon the ear came a long low whisper from the waves which could be seen tossing on the beach and rolling out again to sea. Glanville was deep in contemplation of the wreck before him. 'No one,' he said half aloud, 'can tell me what to do with this, except Ivor Mardol.'

The lady came back at the sound of his voice. 'And who is Ivor Mardol?' she said.

Before he had time to answer Lord Trelingham entered. He bore in his hand a yellow, dingy-coloured epistle, which, when it was unfolded, almost fell to pieces. He spread it out on a table near the window, for it was growing very dark, and said to the artist: 'Your young eyes will decipher this better than mine. It is written, however, in a beautiful hand. Edgar Valence did all things gracefully and was noted for his penmanship. Will you read it aloud? My daughter knows part of the story, but never till this moment have I shown her Valence's letter.'

CHAPTER IV

THE FACE OF AN IMMORTAL

GLANVILLE looked at the paper before him. The ink was faded, and in places the lines were uneven; but no one could mistake the exquisite character of the hand in which they were traced. There was a date, which I shall not give. But the letter began abruptly.

'I don't know,' it said, 'by what name to address my old friend, who has perhaps injured me, and who no doubt thinks I have injured him. What an age it seems since I left Trelingham! And what an effort to write that word! I meant to have done with it until I could come back and claim a promise I shall never, never forget. Ah, Davenant, if you cared for me or her, if you could only understand how brave, how loyal-hearted she was on that day when heaven and earth, her father and her religion, were against me, you would know whether a man who had once been assured of such an affection could surrender the hope of it. But what am I doing? I may have but a moment before the fever comes on again and my brain takes fire. And I have something to say, a task to fulfil, if my hurt is not too much for me. Should I never rise off the bed where I am lying, it will be your task then, not mine. This letter will reach you somehow. My nurse tells me I ought not to write; but I must, though I were dying. The thing is so strange. Excuse these cramped lines; I can hardly see what I have written, my eyes pain me so. It is the blow that wild fellow gave me across the forehead when I would not let him,—but I am telling the tale askew. Let me try again.

'This place is called Sepúlveda. You never heard of it, I suppose. A gloomy-sounding name, but a grand, romantic piece of country, some forty or fifty miles from Seville, on the spur of a mountain-range that I can see from my window, stretching across the horizon to the north like the drop-scene of a theatre. I was brought here wounded, I don't know how long ago. A week, a month, an eternity, for all I can tell! Down below in the valley I can see, too, the waters of a stream where they broaden into the deep pool of San Lucar. The convent stands on the edge of the pool, and looks at it all day and all night; for its great ruined windows are all on that side. "The convent—what convent?" you ask. It is called San Lucar, I tell you. Ought you not, as a Tractarian, to know who San Lucar was? Did he not work miracles somewhere, and live in a cave, or on a column, or on nothing, for a couple of centuries? Well, I cannot tell you who this San Lucar may have been, for it is not the evangelist, but a local deity. And he is dead, and his bones used to be kept in a shrine of fretted silver in a side-chapel, which, I should think, was always dark in spite of the lamps we saw burning all about it. Oh, my head, my head! I ramble on, as if I had a thousand years to tell this story.

'You know I became an atheist and a democrat before I left Cambridge. I don't mean to hurt your feelings; but the history must begin *there*. And when I quarrelled with Lord Trelingham, and went home and spent a week brooding over my prospects, the thought struck me that I might as well join these Spaniards, who were doing a fine anti-Christian work since completed by Mendizabal, where it was much wanted, expelling monks, pulling down monasteries, turning the priests adrift, and burning up the foul rubbish that the Inquisition had heaped together and made holy.'

Glanville, who had hesitated in his reading more than once, now came to a dead pause, and said to Lord Trelingham, 'Ought I to read all this? It can only give you pain.'

'Never mind,' said the Earl; 'I have read it too often to be pained now. There is not much more of it; and Valence says truly enough that it is necessary to the understanding of his adventure.'

The artist read on: 'I sailed from England three days after quitting my home; and in less than a month was enrolled among the volunteers who fought for progress and against Don Carlos. I should like, if I had time, to describe some of our wild picturesque doings in the South. Never had I imagined anything so frantic, strange, stirring; such a droll medley of old-world romance and unwashed barbarism, of orange-groves, and moonlight, and harsh music, and dusty marches, and raging multitudes of men and women, of flying monks, and shrieking and dancing mobs, not only in the great squares, but in the churches and the long-inviolate cloisters; and, in brief, as mad a world, with furious clamours, and a high burning sun to add to the excitement, as there ever was in the Middle Ages. It deadened my feelings of loss to find all things around me going to ruin; and I was reckless and even happy.

'I do not mind acknowledging that the ruffian band, of which I became captain,—for promotion is rapid in these parts of the world,—were as savage and motley a crew as ever escaped hanging. I often seemed to be living over *Gil Blas* on a grander scale, with all the riff-raff of centuries gathered round me and following the tattered banner of the Revolution. But dirty work must be done with dirty tools. These men were good enough to pull down a system that was worse than themselves; for it pretended to have come from heaven, and they didn't much care whether they came from heaven or hell; neither did they trouble as to which of the two would have them by and by. They hated monkery, and they liked a wild life. Certain of them, however, were fierce fanatics; and one of these gave me trouble enough. He was a stalwart young fellow, more gipsy, I should think, than genuine Spaniard. He had been a monk in Jaen, and had run away from his monastery as soon as he got the chance. How he delighted in breaking open church-gates, and smashing altars, and pulling the great images down from their pedestals! You will not suppose I minded that! There is only one mythology I would spare for its beauty—not the medieval, which is a fantastic dream, —but that calm old Greek world of loveliness, where the gods are the forms of Nature become breathing marble, and

the heroes are daring and human, with their glorious limbs and fair faces. They have no place in this half-African land brooded over by the sultry air from Sahara, and too hot and feverish to bring forth yellow-haired Greeks. No, I looked on while the churches were defaced and their shrines plundered. But my gipsy-monk would have gone much further. He was, as you would say, no gentleman. And he took my reprimands as sullenly as he dared.

'It seems such a while, and yet again the picture is so distinct that it might have been yesterday, since we marched out of Seville towards San Lucar. At this moment I have before my eyes the stains upon a great square flagstone, near a church we passed, where a priest had lately been killed by the mob. Felayo, the gipsy, pointed them out to me, and said, "I wish I had been there." But he added, "We shall catch some of them, if they have not taken to their heels, at San Lucar." For that secluded convent we were making. It was served by a number of clergy, who lived, all except the chaplain of the nuns, up here at Sepúlveda; for it was not a convent of men. What led us to make such a long expedition was the knowledge that San Lucar had never been spoiled, nor its cloister invaded, even by the French during the Peninsular War; and although its treasures were at that time hidden for safety, they had come to light again and were worth seizing. And then, the delight of ruining an untouched shrine—these were *spolia opima* to draw us on! We marched somewhat leisurely, as Southerns will; but as nobody in Seville quite knew which way we were going, and any one of a dozen convents might have been our attraction, we gained San Lucar without a rumour of the impending catastrophe reaching the good sisters. They were at their beads from morning till night; and, as we marched up the valley late in the afternoon, we could hear the loud voices of the priests chanting one of their evening services. We had come in three days, but had left stragglers on the road, and were now a company of a hundred and twenty. . . . I cannot continue. The pen drops from my hand.'

Glanville naturally paused again. Lady May, who had

given him the closest attention, said, in a sort of impatience, 'Please go on.' And he resumed:

'It is some days since I broke off,' said the manuscript; 'I wonder when I shall finish, or whether I shall at all. I have been asleep, they tell me, and raving a good deal in an unknown tongue. No one here understands English. But they have caught a name which I seemed to be incessantly repeating—her name! *Ay de mi!* Let me make an end. But what are the words that some one is faintly singing under my window? I can just make them out. Apt enough they sound to me,—listen—

> "'Las venas con poca sangre,
> Los ojos con mucha noche."

Little blood in the veins, and heavy night upon the eyelids. I must hasten while I may. We did nothing that evening except to keep the passes of the valley. It was known outside the convent that we had come, and why; but the peasants had been cowed by the revolutionary frenzy of the towns, and we neither expected resistance nor much cared if it were attempted. We were stirring next day with the sun. What a glorious morning broke over the valley and the stream, and drove back the darkness towards the mountains as with a single sweep of some glittering sword in heaven! Such a clear light came over the white monastery walls, and was reflected from the lake as we marched up to the huge wooden gates that divided the cloister from the world without. Felayo beat upon them with his thundering club, which had shattered so many before. But they stood unshaken, and we saw that if we were to enter at that point we must open with a regular assault. As we hesitated to begin one of the men cried out that the church doors would be easier. That great building stood outside the cloister and opened on the public highway. We marched hastily towards it; and what was our surprise when we drew near to distinguish the solemn sounds of choral chanting and organ accompaniment within! "They are singing Mass," cried Felayo; "I suppose they would like to win the crown of martyrdom, as their good ancestors did when the wicked Moors slew them;" and again he raised

his club, this time with effect, against the sacred gates. One blow drove in the rusty lock, a second and a third, aided by the pikes of the rest, broke the framework in pieces, and with yells of rage and triumph the men rushed in.

'Far away, in the dim light, we saw the priests in their vestments at the altar, and ranged on each side in the stalls choristers in white, holding books from which, though now in trembling tones, they were singing. Just as we entered the voices fell silent; the organ, which stood away in some recess, took up a softer strain; and I saw the chief priest kneel, then rise again quickly, and lift up the host on high to be adored by the prostrate throng. As if maddened at the sight, Felayo, who had paused a moment, went wildly up the church, calling on us to follow, leaped the silver altar-rails, and struck down the priest where he stood. In an instant all was confusion. Felayo swept the sacred vessels from the altar; and, as the choristers ran out from their stalls in deadly terror, some to rescue the priest from being trampled on, others to take up their holy things which lay on the ground, and one or two of the bolder spirits to thrust back Felayo, I looked up and beheld that miscreant standing on the altar like a conquering demon. Hideous he seemed, with swarthy face and malignant flashing eyes, his arm again uplifted for destruction, and his voice ringing through the church in a defiant shriek. And as I lifted my eyes the clear morning light came in through the windows of the chancel, flooding the space above him; and I saw, as in a vision of glory, a face that I knew, with an expression that was all tenderness and divine tranquillity, shining down on the confusion unmoved, and a host of figures in glorious raiment about it. "Alice!" I cried, and sprang upon the altar, as Felayo lifted his head and caught sight of the picture. For it was a picture, not a vision or a dream. Above the altar, like the tutelary saint of the place, depicted in mysterious attitude and with the symbolism of some Catholic doctrine, Alice, whom I had left in England, of whom I dreamt day and night, was before my eyes; and her glance seemed to go through my very heart. I stood bewildered; the next moment I was recalled to myself by Felayo's voice, as he thundered

out, "Ho, comrades, mount up here and pull down this Virgin of the monks." I caught him by the throat and flung him to the ground, leaping after him as he fell. "Down, dog," I shouted; "you shall not touch the picture." He was so taken aback by the unexpected assault that for a little while he stared at me without answering. Then, gathering himself up for a spring, he strove to get from under my hand; but I held him fast by the throat, and while the others came round in amazement, I cried out, "You may pull the church to pieces and plunder what you will, but this Madonna remains sacred. I claim it for myself." I cannot say what they thought of me, but none were so fanatical as the gipsy, and they seemed to respect my whim, for they drew back and began to form into parties to despoil the rest of the church and invade the convent. Even whilst I knelt with Felayo in my grasp, I could see the nuns, who were separated by a carved screen from the body of the church, as they stood shivering in the midst of their cloistered aisle, uncertain whether to flee or remain. Felayo turned himself under me. "Let me go," he said; "I will not touch your accursed picture."—"Do you promise?" I asked. He answered through his teeth, "Yes, I promise." I allowed him to rise to his feet; but, no sooner had he done so, than, drawing his sword, he slashed me across the forehead, and had not my peaked cap partly warded the blow, that would have been the end of Edgar Valence. I was, however, only half-stunned, and with a rapidity equal to his own, I drove the sword I held in my hand through the villain's heart. With a frightful roar of pain he fell dead beside the priest whose life, in the crush and confusion, had been trampled out of him.

'Meanwhile, the invaders were breaking down the cloister, tearing from their places silver lamps and the precious gates of the various shrines, rending the vestments to pieces, and hurling the great crucifixes to the ground. The noise, the riot, were indescribable. I appointed a couple of men to guard the high altar; and seeing what was likely to happen now the soldiers were getting infuriated, I made my way over the fallen screen into the nuns' cloister, and endeavoured to restore a little

order amid the confusion. I told the sisters they were free to depart, but that resistance was impossible. If they wished to be dealt with kindly, let them go to Sepúlveda and prepare lodgings and refreshments for the wounded, of whom there were several on both sides. For the younger priests, when their blood was up, did not hesitate to grapple with the soldiers. There is always in the Spanish temper a wild devil to be roused; and these sons of the sanctuary were as eager for the fray as their assailants, after they had seen their mass interrupted and the priest flung down. But they had no weapons, except the fragments of the woodwork and church furniture; and in no long time they were overpowered. When the high altar was understood to be my share of the spoils, a general rush was made towards the chapel of San Lucar. I followed out of curiosity, for I could not bring myself to lay a profane hand upon anything in a place where Alice seemed to be gazing at me, and with her heavenly presence reproving my unhallowed thoughts. I saw the shrine dismantled, the dust of the saint scattered where his worshippers had knelt for ages to ask his intercession, the lamps quenched and borne away by the soldiery, the huge windows broken, and the church from end to end made a wreck,—all things in it ruined save the exquisite vision looking down upon the high altar. The men ate and drank about the place, and jeered their prisoners, and would have quarrelled over the spoil, had not an order come towards mid-day from Seville, directing us to quit the convent and take up our quarters in Sepúlveda.

'I was greatly embarrassed, for I would not leave the portrait of Alice to the mercy of the new image-breakers; and yet go we must. In this perplexity, one of the wounded priests whispered to me that, if I wished to save the Virgin, there was a secure place under the altar where it might be hidden. Let me send the rest away and he would show me. I thought the matter out for a while. We could not get the wounded to Sepúlveda without mules, of which we had very few. Whatever was to be done must be done at once; but to stay for the wounded could not be an infringement of orders. I sent men off to

find means of transport; and, keeping only three whom I knew to be loyal fellows, when the church was cleared I bade the priest show me the hiding-place of which he spoke. He was badly hurt, but he contrived to reach the altar, and touching the great slab at which mass had been said, he made it move out of its place noiselessly. There was a dry vault underneath, and several huge coffers in it where treasure had once been stored. If the altar were broken down, the vault would be discovered; otherwise, it was safe enough. We unfastened the great picture, not without difficulty, from its place on the wall; covered it with remnants of the heavy silk hangings; and were so fortunate as to come upon a chest which would hold it under lock and key. I took possession of the key, which is now under my pillow, and will never leave me till the picture is removed to some fitter resting-place. The priest explained to me the secret of the spring; and the great slab, revolving once more, concealed from the returning soldiery what we had done.

'They were anxious to get off with their booty; we left the convent—bare, a habitation for the beasts of the field, and a shelter for owls and other night-birds; and by the evening our men were lodged in Sepúlveda. My head was aching from the sword-stroke of Felayo; I could get no farther than the farmhouse where I am now lying. I know that I have had an attack of brain-fever. The detachment I commanded has gone, I cannot say on what errand; for it went in haste, leaving me to my fate. These good nuns look upon me as a guardian angel; all they saw was that I protected their Madonna from destruction and themselves from insult. They are not aware that I helped to overturn many a shrine before I came to San Lucar. They tell me I have been near dying. Why not? Should I live, is there any prospect for me? The vision of Alice forbids me to join my old companions; I cannot bear to think that I might see her face again, looking down on me in the next sanctuary I profaned. All I desire is to rescue the canvas whereon she breathes and lives, and return with it to England. If I die before this can be accomplished, I charge you to see to it. The convent will never be

dwelt in again; and you will have small difficulty in securing this miraculous piece of driftwood. What its history may be, I do not know. I have been too weak to put any questions about it; and these sisters, though well-meaning, are extremely ignorant. I doubt that they could tell me the true story; legends, of course, they have in plenty.

'Davenant, if I get well, you must prepare Lord Trelingham to receive me, if only once, within his threshold. I will not entrust the portrait of Alice to another. But when I have put it into his hands, I will turn again and he shall see me no more until he welcomes me as his daughter's husband.

'Thank the kind fates that have suffered me to write this. I am dead tired. I shall sleep now; and perhaps never waken. But this letter, at all events, will reach you. Say to Alice,—ah no, you will give her no message from me. I hear the voice singing again the self-same words beneath my window—

> "Las venas con poco sangre,
> Los ojos con mucha noche,
> Lo halló en el campo aquella,
> Vida y muerte de los hombres."

How pretty these old Spanish romances are! But it was not in the field that either love or death found me; yet, weak though I may be, I am strong enough to meet my fate, come when and how it will. E. V.'

There was no other signature.

CHAPTER V

BUT THOU TO ME ART MORE THAN ALL!

'WAS I not right,' said the Earl, 'in calling that a strange letter? As you have read it to me, so did I read it to my father, keeping an anxious eye on the door at which Lady Alice had gone out, and every moment dreading her return. What could we say to her? Was it possible to hide Valence's danger, or the likelihood of his arrival at Trelingham? Breaking a heavy silence, my father observed, "This has taken almost a year to reach its destination. Should Valence be still living, we must expect him in England soon; nor can I decline to accept, even from his hands, a portrait which has long been wanting in our gallery." I looked at him in surprise. "What!" I said; "has not Valence dreamt the whole story? His letter was written during an access of brain-fever; and must we not suppose that his constant brooding on the loss of my sister, combined with reminiscences of the legend of Lady Elizabeth, has shaped his fancies to this extraordinary result?"— "No," replied my father; "Valence must have done what he describes. Either he never knew or has forgotten the story of Lady Elizabeth. You see he does not once refer to it."'

'And may I ask,' said Glanville, 'what is the legend of Lady Elizabeth?'

'I will tell you,' replied his host. 'Ours, my dear Mr. Glanville, is not itself a very ancient peerage. It dates from Charles II., when Sir William Davenant became Viscount Davenant and Earl of Trelingham. But in his wife was represented a much older line; and it was chiefly by reason of his marriage with her that Sir William was raised

to the House of Lords. She was the last of that old West Country stock, the Trelinghams of Trelingham. Her father died abroad during the usurpation of Cromwell; and his brothers—the family were Roman Catholic—had taken orders at Rome and St. Omer, but died before him. Hence the title of Trelingham became extinct. But Lady Elizabeth inherited in her own right the estates which had gone with it; and she was in a convent when her father died. The family chronicles add that the convent was in Spain, but not the name or precise situation. She was on the point of taking the veil, and had she done so, there is no doubt the estates of Trelingham would have passed to the Commonwealth. She was persuaded, therefore, to return home. Her nearest relative, a Protestant cousin, sought her hand; but he was grasping and ambitious, and twenty years older than the lady. She refused him, and bestowed herself and Trelingham on Sir William Davenant, who, though not of her faith, was chivalrous enough to respect it. She loved him so well that, in course of time, she joined our communion, and her children were brought up in the doctrine of the English Church. She died young, however, and the story ran that she repented of having changed her religion. Certain it is that a mystery attached to Lady Elizabeth—the name by which she was usually designated in honour of the ancient line. She would never allow her portrait to be painted; and when I was a boy its place in the gallery—at the very spot where we are now sitting—was indicated by a purple veil on which in black letter was inscribed the name of Elizabeth, Countess of Trelingham, with the dates of her birth and decease. What was the explanation? Well, here Valence's story came in. It was said that, when a girl at her Spanish convent, Lady Elizabeth had been chosen, by a painter whose name we never heard, to represent the Virgin in a great altar-piece; and that an instinct of reverence, mingled perhaps with remorse, determined her never to allow, for ends of pride or vanity, that countenance to be depicted by a worldly artist, which had been dedicated to religion and enshrined above an altar. We did not often repeat the legend; we had no picture to show, and assuredly

we did not dream that a resemblance existed between the features of my sister and those of her far-away ancestress. Valence's letter was a revelation.

'While we talked Lady Alice came back, looking so pale that I ran to her, expecting her to faint in my arms. She thanked me in a feeble voice, but declared that she was strong enough to bear anything save uncertainty. I gave her the letter; she sat down and was absorbed in it, reading with eager haste, turning back sometimes as though fearing to lose a word, and quite unmindful of our presence. She uttered no exclamation when he spoke of seeing her above the altar; she was too intent on the sequel, and I dreaded to see her come to his last words. As she did so a fit of shuddering seized her. But with a strong effort she mastered her emotion, and saying only, "I will wait, I will wait," she let the paper fall to her feet and came and put her arms about our father's neck. "Papa," she said, "do not fear me; I will be a good daughter. Only let, let Edgar come. He will not be so unbelieving then. See how this strange thing has softened him. By and by he will follow your advice, and we shall be happy." Her voice broke, her eyes streamed with tears. "Very well," my father replied, "if he comes I will see him. But you must be patient."—"I will, I will," she whispered, and took up the letter again and was lost in it.

'Patience! It was a wise word. The months passed and he did not arrive. My sister was falling into a decline, my father hastening to his grave; and, I confess it with shame, I had fierce thoughts about Edgar Valence. Why did he not write? But perhaps he had expired at Sepúlveda. I did not think so. I hated him.

'On a dark cold evening in November, when the snow was lying deep, my father breathed his last. We buried him on the bleak hillside, which looks almost as cold and dark this morning.' And, interrupting himself, the Earl pointed out to Glanville where the old gray church of Trelingham rose up from the precipitous shore, with the green churchyard and the mounds of the dead on every side of it. He resumed: 'The next day, late in the afternoon, as I was seated in my study, and Lady Alice was

reclining in her own room, too much exhausted to move, a stranger was announced. He gave no name. I bade them show him into the drawing-room. I entered, and my eyes fell on Edgar Valence. Through the windows I could see that it was snowing fast.

'He stood wrapt in furs, bareheaded, and immovable, with the scar quite plain on his forehead. When he saw me, his movement testified surprise. "I asked to see Lord Trelingham," he murmured. Then he observed that I wore deep mourning. "Is any one dead?" he cried excitedly; "is Alice——?" I interrupted him. "Lord Trelingham is dead, not my sister. What is your business, Mr. Valence?" The words were cold and unfriendly, but I was much moved. He looked like one risen from the grave; his soldierly bearing could not disguise the feebleness of his health. He had suffered, and the sword-stroke of Felayo had been almost fatal. But he must not see Alice. "Did my letter from Sepúlveda reach you?" he inquired. "Yes; but why did you not write again?" He smiled. "When I quitted my farmhouse," he said, "I took service in the regular army. I was wounded again, taken prisoner, carried into Estremadura, and did not escape till seven weeks ago. Why should I have written? Would Alice have seen my letters?"

'"I do not know," was my answer; "but had you come in my father's lifetime, for her sake he would have granted you an interview. He would have done no more; and, Valence, unless you are changed neither will I."

'He answered, alas! in his old firm voice, "I am not changed; do not think it. Nor is my love for Alice."

'"Be it so," was my reply, "then you may look for the same course from me that my father would have pursued."

'"And what is that, may I ask?"

'I knew very well the answer I meant to give. It was imperative on me as a son and a Christian; but it would cost me a sharp pang to utter it, when I thought of my poor sister lying dangerously ill, without heart or hope, and the desolate future before us. I delayed the fatal moment. Instead of replying, I said to Valence, "Did you return to San Lucar, as you hoped?"—"Return?" he

cried; "had I not returned and brought away the portrait, do you think I should have ventured hither to-day? The picture is waiting at your lodge gates. Will you receive it? Will you tell some of your servants to bring it up? Do you know anything about it?"

'I told him the story as briefly as I could. He was surprised and attentive. "Why," he said, "this, if I believed in a special Providence, should be a decisive intimation that Alice and I were made for one another. You grant it, surely, Davenant."

'I shook my head. "There are coincidences," I answered, "which have an evil purport. I cannot think, if you are unchanged, that this will come to good."

'I gave the order he suggested. While we sat speechless—for what could we touch upon that would not be painful?—awaiting the return of the servants with the picture, I became more and more uneasy lest my sister should come in. And what was to be the end? On such a night I could not turn my bitterest enemy from the door. Edgar Valence to sleep at Trelingham Court, the night after my father's funeral! It was strange, it was most undesirable, yet I saw no way out of it. I could not help asking him, "How long have you been in England? My father's death was announced six days ago."

'"Very likely," he replied; "I landed at Plymouth that very day, and came with the utmost speed hither. At first I thought of preparing you for my arrival. But you might have declined seeing me, and I judged it better to take you by surprise and trust to the generous impulses"—he spoke with frank courtesy; how winning I used to think it!—"which have always seemed to me inherent in the family of Trelingham. I saw no one—I was not aware of your father's illness, much less of what has happened."

'The men were coming in slowly with their burden. I could not but think, as the door opened, of another and a sad burden that had been carried out yesterday. I would not have them stay in the hall, or go up to the picture-gallery; and the tall package was set up against a bookcase in my study. Lamps were kindled, and Valence and I, with equal agitation, tore off the coverings, and the Madonna

of San Lucar broke upon my view. At first, like Valence, I saw nothing of the accessories which are all that is now left of the painting. It was the face I sought; and oh! how strangely it resembled Alice when she was yet untouched by grief and all her thoughts were of the innocent home in which she had been brought up, or of the heavenly world that religion unfolded to her. I gazed and gazed. Can you realise what it is to have the dead beautiful past resuscitated, as at a stroke—the past, which you deemed irrevocable? I felt pity and deep regret, and a kind of protest that these things should be—a young life faded and marriage impossible. The fate of Alice, of Edgar Valence himself, scarred and maimed as he came before me, our friendship turned to estrangement—it was too much. I knew not how to speak, or what to do; and when Valence, laying his hand on my shoulder, said, "Do you think I can live without seeing her?—have pity on me," I could only reply that in the morning they should meet, and then—then, if she held to her promise, I would do all that a brother should.

'On this understanding we parted for the night. I went to my own chamber, he to his, but there was no sleep for either of us. How was I to reconcile my father's wishes and the honour of a family which had ever been true to Church and King, with the opinions, the character, the inclinations of Valence? Lord Trelingham, it is true, had exacted no promise from me; and my sister, though not of age, wanted so few months of it that to all intents she might be deemed her own mistress. But the very existence of our house was at stake. Who could say that the succession to name and property would not pass to my sister's issue? There was no other relative but a distant cousin, and he unmarried, and what if her children were brought up atheists and democrats? I shuddered at the thought, and my former resolution shone out in the clearest light of reason as of religious duty. But, on the other side, was my sister's happiness, perhaps her life.

'With the morning came another anxiety. How was I to prepare Alice for the surprise, the tumultuous joy, that she would undoubtedly feel, and for all the momentous

issues that hung upon the next few hours! Her feeble health, endangered by mental anguish so long endured, would give way under this new strain were she to meet it without warning. I hastened to Valence's room. He was already dressed, and his fatigued look showed me that he had slept as little as I. In a few words I begged him to wait upstairs till I sent for him. He understood and made no demur. I inquired after Lady Alice, and was told that she was too weak to come down to the breakfast-room. I now sent her a message requesting her to meet me in the picture-gallery at half-past ten. There was no time to lose. Summoning a skilful workman and a couple of servants to help him, I ordered the Madonna of San Lucar to be conveyed noiselessly to its destined place among the family portraits, and fixed with the utmost expedition. My directions were carried out. When the appointed hour came the picture was hanging on the wall, and the dark curtain which had so long marked its absence alone concealed it from view. My sister entered the gallery, and came to me looking weary and distracted. I took her by the hand, asked her an indifferent question or two, and led her to speak of her own feelings. When we had reached the spot where I am now telling this story I induced her to sit down and continued the conversation till, in a pause I intentionally made, she looked round and saw that the curtain did not hang as usual. She looked again steadfastly, and with agitated voice and manner asked me what was behind it. I answered as lightly as I could, "Do you think Lady Elizabeth's portrait is there?" Quicker than thought she divined my meaning; her hand was on the curtain, she drew it aside, and, sinking on her knees, exclaimed, "He is come; Edgar is come. Oh, God be thanked!" She gave way to a burst of weeping, which I thought it prudent to indulge, saying, when she was grown calmer, "Alice, do you think you can bear to see him?" What an expression was on her countenance as she rose up and faced me! "Have I lived," she cried, "for anything else?" The colour came into her cheeks while she spoke, and her breathing was like that of a fever-patient, short and difficult. She almost fell back into her chair, but recovering,

bade me tell Valence that she would see him here and now. I did not venture to leave her alone. I rang for a servant, and gave him the message that Valence had been all these hours expecting in his room upstairs. A step was heard coming down, a slow but determined step, which we hardly knew. I motioned Alice to sit still, and went to the door; but no sooner had Valence appeared than my sister flew to him, and they were clinging to one another in a long embrace. I moved away towards the new-found portrait of Lady Elizabeth; the same feeling which had inspired me seemed to take hold of them, and we found ourselves, for the first and last time in our lives, united before the Madonna of San Lucar.

'The first and last! One happy moment we had, and then the struggle began again—if struggle it could be called, which was all on my side and most unwilling. I knew that whenever Alice should perceive the physical helplessness to which Valence was reduced, the argument for affection would be strengthened a thousand-fold. It was pretty and exceedingly touching to witness how, on observing his scarred forehead, she clung to him more closely, looking at him again and again with a sort of motherly tenderness. Her tears flowed silently, but she smiled, and, in more cheerful tones than I had heard for many months, she exclaimed, "Well, brother, you see that all is clear now. I cannot leave this poor Edgar. He has waited and suffered, and he has my promise. Poor Edgar!" And she fondly repeated the words as if caressing a child. I was overcome, but not wholly. Valence, still encircling her with his arm, said to me, "Davenant, love is stronger than death," and he gave me a half-mocking, half-melancholy smile. I will not relate the discussion that followed. On my sister it was impossible to make an impression; but from Valence I demanded a solemn engagement that he would bring up his children in their ancestral faith, and allow me, or some one whom he might name, to be their guardian. Alice kept her eyes fixed on him, and I question whether she comprehended a syllable of our dispute. It was in vain. At last I reminded Valence of the dignities inseparable from the House of Trelingham, which it was my bounden duty to

preserve unimpaired. "And do you think," he answered, "that I believe more in your titles and laws of inheritance than I do in your traditional religion? What an idiot I should be! No, Davenant; when your sister accepts my hand she breaks, I do not say with the affection of her kindred, but with the delusive greatness they call theirs. She will be no longer Lady Alice; and you may rely upon it, no child of mine will claim the title or estates, or will touch a stiver belonging to the House of Trelingham. I have enough to live upon; and if I had not, a man can earn his bread. With your sister's beliefs I do not interfere; it is too late, and she could renounce them only to be unhappy. But these things," he went on, looking scornfully round the gallery and waving his hand towards the long line of pictures, "I think she will give up these without shedding tears over them. Will you not, darling?"

'Her only answer was to hide her face in his bosom. I could say no more. I turned and went in silence out of the gallery. I knew not with which of them I felt the more indignant. Both were obstinate, perverse, unreasonable. The rest of the day I spent among my books. At dinner Lady Alice informed me that Valence was gone, but I made no remark. During the few weeks she remained at Trelingham we met as seldom as possible. A month later she went away. The *Times* announced, in regular form, that Colonel Edgar Valence and Lady Alice Davenant were married at a London church, and from that hour my sister was lost to me. Her I never beheld again; but her tomb—you may see it beside my father's in Trelingham churchyard. There Colonel Valence had her interred, I know not in what year, for I was abroad and we never exchanged a line, but it must be eight and twenty years ago, before my daughter was born. Whether they had any children, how they lived, or in what way my poor sister died, I could never learn.'

CHAPTER VI

THERE GLOOM THE DARK BROAD SEAS

THE Earl's emotion in concluding his narrative made the last sentence almost inaudible. Glanville would have liked to inquire whether Colonel Valence was still living, and in what part of the world. But he refrained, seeing how deeply Lord Trelingham was moved. After some time, the latter said, with an effort, 'That is the story, and now what plan do you suggest? How are we to deal with the picture?'

'It is almost impossible to say,' he replied. 'Were it merely a question of painting, I could perhaps, on my own judgment, attempt to restore the general effect, if Lady May would kindly sit to me for the Madonna. Peculiar as the style is, I might do something. But to restore the canvas I must call in a friend who is more at home in the miraculous. I mentioned him last night, Lady May. He has a bizarre sort of name—Ivor Mardol.'

'Oh, that is Ivor Mardol,' replied the lady; 'well, call him in. My father is not likely to object.'

'No, I am sure,' said Glanville; 'but my friend—I should find it hard to describe him. It is his pleasure not to be clothed in soft garments nor to dwell in kings' houses. He is extremely unconventional, and being in manners and education far more than a workman, and refusing to be called a gentleman, it would be no easy task to find, in a house like this, the niche that would suit him.'

'What is he then by profession?' inquired Lord Trelingham.

'An engraver,' replied Glanville; 'but he works for himself, not for a firm or a newspaper. He is well enough

off; lives in his own little house in a street near Charing Cross, which he has made as quaint and suggestive of the artistic life as any workshop in the time of Quentin Matsys or Albert Dürer; and is, in short, a quiet, large-minded, quick-eyed young man, acquainted not only with his own branch of study, but with painting and painters, and the history of art since the Egyptians, if they began it. He will sometimes condescend to stay with me, though seldom. He lives in his work and the studies to which it leads him. Odd and out-of-the-way society he likes, and has friends very low down in the depths. I should think he has never seen the inside of a drawing-room, except in a picture.'

'What a delightfully fresh being you describe!' said Lady May; 'you must persuade him to come to us. We will excuse him from attendance in the drawing-room. We will fit him up a hermitage in the Park, or assign him a lodging in the tower. But he must come to us, though we should have to employ stratagem.'

'My dear May,' said the Earl, 'you let your fancies run away with you. Of course, if Mr. Glanville thinks his friend would come, and that his knowledge could help us to restore Lady Elizabeth's portrait, there could be no difficulty in letting him follow his own way of life while staying here.'

'What I was thinking,' said Glanville, 'is, that if he saw the Madonna he could tell us whether a replica of it is anywhere to be met. Or, indeed, without seeing it he might. On the other hand, should it be necessary to attempt its restoration, I could have no more skilful assistant. The one thing for which I should, in that case, stipulate, would be, as you kindly say, Lord Trelingham, that he might be suffered to live in his own way.'

'But there is really a hermitage in the Park,' said Lady May, 'an attempt at an Alpine cottage, just large enough to hold one person and his brushes, if he happened to be an artist. It stands on an islet in the river, screened from observation by wooded heights, and is off the paths in the Chase. It is not far either.'

'That sounds enticing,' said Glanville. 'I cannot see my way without Ivor Mardol; and, if your Lordship agrees'

—he turned to Lord Trelingham—'I will acquaint him with the proposal.'

'By all means,' said the Earl.

'And he shall have the hermitage,' said Lady May, 'and as much solitude as he chooses.'

'I cannot be sure,' said Glanville thoughtfully, 'that you will like him; description goes for so little. He is a bright, unworldly spirit, but reserved to excess when not among intimate friends.'

'Is he married?' inquired the lady.

'Not that I am aware,' said Glanville, with a smile; 'but that is one of the points on which he would be most reserved, if the whim seized him. I know nothing of his relations or surroundings beyond what I see. Nor, though we have been friends since we were at school, has he uttered a syllable respecting them. However, personal talk was never a characteristic of Ivor Mardol. His mind is given elsewhere. For a man not yet thirty, he is marvellously staid and self-contained.'

'You describe an interesting, almost a romantic personage,' said Lady May. 'We must hope he will not be deaf to your persuasions.' And so the matter dropped. Nothing more could be done till the 'almost romantic personage' had been consulted. The portrait of Lady Elizabeth was taken away. In its stead, the curtain which had hung there before was put up for the time being; and when Tom Davenant came from his equine studies, he found that his strong arm was not to be called into requisition, but only the brains of Ivor Mardol, described as 'something between a workman and a gentleman.' Tom lifted his eyebrows slightly. 'What kind of cross is that?' he inquired of the Earl. 'I don't think those half-breeds usually turn out well.' But I must do him the justice to remark that he spoke in a professional and abstract point of view, and not with contempt for the 'half-breed.' Tom despised nobody. But he liked the distinction of races to be kept. As he said now and then with the succinct wisdom which sat so well upon him, 'You can't get an Arab out of a cart-horse.'

I have no intention of chronicling the luncheons and

dinners that were eaten at Trelingham during those eventful days. My reader must imagine them, with the dull or brilliant conversation which served as their intellectual garnish; and he may as well, at the same time, picture to himself the amusements or occupations—it was not always easy to distinguish between them—which filled up the intervals. The story I have in hand does not concern itself a great deal with eating and drinking, nor much with the amusements of the great world; though, doubtless, it was entangled in all these threads of the earthly life.

Suppose, then, luncheon over, and Glanville bent on a lonely walk by the sea, in spite of the rain-clouds and an occasional downpour. He took a delight in wild weather, and found it inspiring; nor did it bring to his mind melancholy visions, sad landscapes, or the gloomy uncomfortable forebodings which seemed in Lady May to be its accompaniment. He liked to live within himself, as he phrased it; and he was never more so than when the sky lowered overhead, and the sullen or defiant roar of the waters came, as now, like a deafening thunder all round him. Imagine him sauntering along the shingly beach. What had been told in the picture-gallery did not keep its grasp on his fancy down here; it served merely as an occasion to dream and muse, exciting him as a volume of Spanish ballads might have done, with their lingering assonance, their fine heroic clangour, and undercurrent of love, disastrous or fortunate. He thought of Lady May, of the Earl, of Lady Alice, much as you or I might have thought of them after hearing the story,—with interest, and some degree of wonder that so romantic an incident should have come athwart the monotonous course of the Earl's life; but he felt no deeper emotion. Did he not stand outside their circle? When he had restored the wrecked portrait and painted the dining-hall, he should lose sight of Trelingham, and the days he was now beginning would roll up like a scroll. He had touched upon many another circle, come into the lives of old and young, and gone out of them again. 'What a lonely fellow I am!' he said to himself. 'But for Ivor, I should not have a friend, to call a friend, in the world.' It was this, perhaps, that drew them together.

Ivor seemed to be cut off from the sweet companionship of home, and a solitary from childhood, much liked, successful in his work, but still—alone. 'And I am alone, too,' repeated Glanville. His parents had died when he was just beginning to know them; the guardian of his moderate estate had been a man of law, highly conscientious and careful, but at no time capable of winning his ward's confidence, and now himself gone the way of all flesh. He stood there, the centre of his own universe, solitary but for Ivor.

Thinking thus, the old schooldays came back to him, that careless dreamy time when human nature is making the first trial of itself, and a boy looks on at his own deeds and ripening qualities with as little concern as though they belonged to a stranger, yet is liable to deep and sudden passion, to fits of melancholy and of longing, to pain and disquietude, which sometimes leave their mark on him for life. He remembered the springing up of this friendship, fast as Jonah's gourd; how it seemed perfect in an hour and had continued ever since. They say that only school friendships last. It may be so. At any rate, here was an exchange of mind, heart, imagination, of feelings and experience, that had resulted in steadfast devotion and an almost passionate rivalry of good offices. Rupert Glanville was proud of the ancient Norse blood that ran in his veins; and the name of Ivor Mardol suggested a kindred other than English. Both these young men, however, combined a high degree of reserve and stern silence with a frankness of sentiment which, among Englishmen, is seldom exhibited—unless in moods that express contempt or anger. The explanation perhaps lay in this, that they were both, though by no means after the same fashion, artists. Neither of them took up the instruments of his calling as a drudgery, but in obedience to an instinct, and as a life-long dedication which no success or increase of fortune would lead him to renounce. Brilliant, sociable, and, in a measure, volatile, Rupert had yet never declined the hard work of the studio. His own lightness of disposition led him to admire his friend's patient philosophy, wide learning, and easy waving aside of the world's good gifts.

Rupert had a poetic fancy and a heart which, in his secret musings, he confessed was too liable to momentary conflagrations. He used to say jestingly that he went to his philosopher to have the fire put out. For Mardol, like many gentle persons, had in his nature a fund of austerity. He was tender-hearted, but his principles were severe, and he sometimes unwittingly manifested a rigour of judgment before which Glanville, though not deeply tarred, like so many young men, with the brush of worldliness, was fain to keep back certain of his own frivolities. Except for this perhaps venial offence against friendship, he was loyalty itself. The splendid success he had achieved in the last three years neither corrupted his heart nor dazzled his understanding. He had met none to compare with his schoolboy-friend, and their attachment was never so strong as when he thought of persuading Ivor to join him at Trelingham.

He wandered to and fro on the beach considering it. His letter of invitation was not yet written; indeed, he had chosen this solitary promenade to shape its contents. The hermitage and Ivor Mardol living there on fruit and milk, brought him every morning by a rustic attendant, with the glades of Trelingham Chase for his outlook, made a pretty picture. But to enjoy such solitude, in the neighbourhood of the friends who had bestowed it on him, was possible only to a diseased egoist, and Mardol was by no means that. If he came, he would wish to acknowledge their kindness in a becoming spirit; and could he be at ease or bring out his rare gifts in this too polished society? Would he feel at home? Glanville was not selfish. He weighed these things in the balance. But, again, to have his dearest friend with him! And why should Ivor, in his proud shyness, or whatever it might be termed, deny himself the pleasure of associating with men and women from whom, the moment he was really known to them, he would receive an enthusiastic welcome? He must be entreated to come in the name of their friendship; for his own good he must be taken in the silken snare. He could not go on for ever being a recluse and an outcast from his natural surroundings. He had been so too long. It was all very

well to begin with a healthy scorn of drawing-rooms and conventionalities—nay, to keep a little of it for future occasions; but more than this was cynicism, was not defensible in the eyes of reason, and was heroic on the wrong side altogether.

Thus far did Glanville proceed in his meditation while the wind kept driving in the waves about his feet, and the flying scud ran across the sky, making a chequer of light and dark at once fantastic and impressive. Not another human being was in view. Hither and thither went sea-birds on the wing, shrieking out their thin music, now dipping into the foam with careless plunge, and now sweeping hastily by him to lose themselves in the clouds. There was no boat on the nearer waters; far out on the horizon he seemed to descry a vessel that loomed up while he gazed and sank out of sight again, giving him the most vivid notion he had ever conceived of a tossing sea and an impending shipwreck. He knew the coast was ironbound and perilous; immediately below the reach of sand and shingles he was treading a line of sunken rocks was indicated by the foaming and wind-beaten surge. But the rain came on harder; it was growing late; and he must return to the Court if he would not lose the London post, which left nearly two hours before dinner. He had come down by a long winding path; but there was a shorter way through the churchyard. He would take that.

Shorter it may have been; steeper it undoubtedly proved. Glanville, in the words of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'fell from running to going, and from going to clambering,' while he attempted to guide his steps over the huge stones, with slippery tracts of grass and prickly heather between them, which composed the main part of the ascent. He was soon out of breath, and paused to take in a fresh supply, and look round on the view to which he had turned his back, for, like a true artist, he regretted leaving it. The scene was unutterably grand. A strange, cold light was coming over shore and ocean, bringing out to their smallest detail the crests of the waves, the shining sands, the fringe of rocks to right and left, and the runlets in the heathery sides of the steep he had been climbing. Between the

spectator and the horizon all save this narrow strip was raging sea. On the utmost verge he could still descry the great ship struggling with the waves; but while he looked, it was gone. The rain drove heavily into his face; and he turned again and passed up into the churchyard, of which, in the sudden exchange of daylight for dark, he could not for a moment so much as discern the outlines. It was, in fact, lying under the shadow of a thundercloud that seemed to be gradually sweeping down upon the enclosure, which, marked by a hedge of loose stones, was the cemetery of the parish. In the blinding storm Glanville stumbled along, endeavouring to gain at least the antique porch, where he hoped there might be shelter from the rain and wind. It was utterly dark when he reached it; the church-doors were fastened; and, wet to the skin and almost repenting his afternoon ramble, he sat down on one of the stone seats which, in accordance with some forgotten point of ritual, were on each side of the dim recess. But he could not rest there long. He must stand up and gaze out once more upon the tempest, although to do so he had to shield his eyes from the mingled dust and foam that came driving in with the rain as it blew off the sea. A flash of lightning followed by the rattle of thunder overhead warned him that he was not in a very safe situation. He tried the door again, but it would not yield. Visibly the gloom of a thunderous atmosphere deepened over the churchyard; a mist of rain seemed to cover the ancient mounds of the dead; and the solemn yews stood here and there like uncanny apparitions in a dream, dripping with wet, and rustling mysteriously as the wild airs of heaven blew in upon them.

'What a desolate place!' thought Glanville. 'How it makes one shiver to think of the dead in these storm-swept graves by the sea! Can they rest quietly on such a day as this?' He smiled at his grim fancies even while he indulged them. But, looking, it seemed to him that something, that a figure he had not noticed, was moving in the churchyard among the low hillocks. At first he could not be sure, for the mist was thickening, and it might only be one of the leaning tombstones that to his roused imagina-

tion had assumed the outline of a cloaked figure. Nor had he time to look long. Flash after flash the lightning dazzled his sight, and the peals of thunder, coming faster than he could count, made him draw back into the porch as far as possible. Minutes passed before he could see distinctly. But when the extraordinary violence of the storm was a little abated, and a streak of open sky showed itself among the lower clouds, he saw, not without surprise, a tall figure in a cloak making hastily for the place where he stood. It was no ghost, evidently, although in such ghostly surroundings. Hardly, however, had Glanville made this silent observation, before the rain and the gloom returned, and the stranger, entering as if he perceived no one in the porch, flung himself down on the stone seat, and bent his head against the wall in an attitude of extreme fatigue. The scanty light, or rather, 'darkness visible,' to speak with Milton, showed only a person of commanding stature and flecks of white hair under his drooping hat. Glanville made no sign, but waited, somewhat curious to know what manner of personage it might be that visited so forlorn a spot when tempests were abroad. It was none of the guests at Trelingham; and no house, except the Parsonage, was nearer than three or four miles. Could he be some one staying at Mr. Truscombe's? or King Arthur himself, thought Glanville, come to pay his client a visit and thank him for the enthusiastic belief he cherished in the Table Round? It might well, in mien and lordly bearing, be the fabulous King. While these idle musings were passing through his brain, the artist was astonished to observe that his involuntary companion had fallen asleep where he sat. The soft and regular breathing of a sleeper was unmistakable.

It was a strange situation. To the watcher a sleeping person has always something peculiar, some sense of mystery about him, which inspires a dim and not very comfortable feeling, as of gazing into unknown depths. It is life under the semblance of death, a soul retired into far-away recesses whither we cannot follow, leaving the body animate, yet corpselike, a thing lying on the border of the great abyss and overshadowed by its horror. Glanville felt that a visit-

ant from the tomb would have been almost as welcome. It was worse than being alone; he had a sense of the haunting presence touching him while it could not be held in turn. He would go out of the porch and make his way through the tempest; it was better than waiting in such undesirable company. But what, he said to himself, if the man were in need of succour, and too feeble to quit that out-of-the-way spot without assistance? He did not know whether at the Vicarage, itself some quarter of a mile off, there would be help, or how Mr. Truscombe's people were to know of a stranger lying asleep in the church vestibule. It would be more humane to wait until the man awoke, or gently to rouse him and ascertain his condition.

CHAPTER VII

IN A VAIN SHADOW

THERE was no need to wait long. By some magic stroke in the heavens a ray of sunlight, piercing the sullen clouds, darted in at the door and rested on the sleeper's face. It vanished as quickly as it came, but the instantaneous change in the light seemed to have dispersed the old man's slumber. Yes, he was unmistakably an old man that now opened his eyes and fixed them calmly on Glanville standing by the entrance and watching his motions. He shook himself, came forward, and with an easy air inquired of the artist whether he had found him sleeping, and how long he had been there. Glanville told him what had really happened; and the stranger, thanking him for his courtesy, added that old bones were soon tired, and began to look out in silence at the scene before them. It had changed again. The lower clouds, melting in rain, were nearly gone; and high above them a livid, unbroken mass of vapour stretched over the sky, making a sort of roof that seemed, at the horizon, to bend down and rest on a heavy ridge of purple tinged with white. The boiling sea which occupied the intervening space was desolate as when Glanville last looked across it, save for one object which he did not think to have viewed so nearly. In the midst of the tumbling waves he beheld the same vessel which had been visible less than an hour before. It was not so large as he thought. With bare poles it had been scudding before the gale, but now it was giving a tremendous lurch every moment; and as it turned a broadside towards him there were to be seen figures on deck moving about in great confusion. They seemed in evil

plight. So intent was Glanville on the spectacle that he cried out involuntarily when a red flash from the ship told him that a gun had been discharged. 'What is that for?' he said to his companion, not meaning to speak aloud. A dull boom came upon his ear as the stranger answered, 'It is a signal of distress; she is likely to founder.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Glanville, 'do you mean to tell me she will be wrecked?'

'I think so,' said the other, as if it was a foregone conclusion which did not concern him. 'See, they are signalling again. They will never get into harbour; if she stands in she will go to pieces on the bar. It is a good dozen miles to the next place where she could run in. But that is only a roadstead.'

'But the lifeboat,' cried Glanville, in much distress; 'is there no lifeboat on the coast?'

'What lifeboat would venture on such a sea?' inquired the stranger. 'It would be merely adding to the number of drowned men. Ah, she signals again! It is no use; we shall see her heel over in a few minutes.'

'Oh, horrible, horrible!' said the artist. 'To look on, and be so helpless. If we could but do something,' and he moved to and fro restlessly, looking round in the hope that help of some sort might be putting off from the land. But he could see only the tall vessel staggering along and the waves rising over it.

'You never saw a ship go down, I suppose?' said the old man, eyeing him in a way that implied some pity and a great deal of scorn. Glanville, struck by the harsh ring in the stranger's voice, stopped in his walk and looked, as seeking for an explanation, straight across at him. 'What makes you ask?' he said; 'have you? You seem not to mind it much.'

'What difference can it make whether I mind it or no?' retorted the old man. 'It will not save one of them from drowning. The play must be played out. Do you think of rushing on the stage and rescuing Hamlet or Lear from his fate because you pity him? No, you sit there quietly and enjoy your sentimental illusions and your exquisite weeping. This is but a larger stage. You can't interfere;

be miserable if you must, or if you wish to indulge in the luxury. It is all one to the men in that sinking ship. Ha, what a lurch! She cannot stand much more of it.'

'Why,' said Glanville, 'you talk as if you had not the heart of a man. What hideous nonsense! and at such a time! You are not, you cannot be serious.' The words of the old man seemed to him almost as horrible as the shipwreck he was gazing on.

The other answered with astonishing calm. 'When I was your age,' he said, 'I felt as you do. I have learnt since not to lament the things I cannot help. We must bear them. The time will come, if you live long enough, when you will have witnessed many a ship go down, and be as helpless to save them as you are at this moment. Perhaps it is the deepest pity that sheds no tears.'

The vessel was again out of sight; but they heard the signal-guns from minute to minute; and in Glanville's heart, at least, they excited a sickening sensation, which took away all desire of speech. But he thought he must reply.

'Pardon me, sir,' he said, 'if I did not quite understand you. This dreadful scene,—it is too much.' He stopped abruptly and turned away. The signal came again, but fainter. His next glance seaward showed the horizon one sheet of lightning, and there came crashing down upon them a roar of thunder which appeared to be sounding from every quarter of the heavens.

'You will hear no more signal-guns,' said his companion when the tumult ceased; 'that was probably the last which came before this overwhelming clap of thunder. Nothing can live when sky and sea are gone mad in such fashion. To-morrow planks and spars will be thrown up along the coast, and we shall have to lay in this nook, which holds too many already, the bodies that may be cast ashore. Well, it is all over now; when the play comes to an end the tragedy is out.'

Glanville kept silence. He could not trust himself to speak. The stranger, as though thinking aloud, went on in a lower tone: 'The worst is if the curtain should draw up a second time. To be wrecked is unpleasant,

but the waves close over you, and you sink to sleep as on velvet cushions. I remember the keen sense of anticipation. That cuts deep into a man. But afterwards is nothing in comparison. No,' he said, rousing himself and speaking to Glanville, who was beginning to listen, 'it is coming back to life that I regret, not seeing it slip away into the ocean.'

'Were you ever in a shipwreck, then?' asked the young man, softening.

'Once, many years since,' he replied.

'And you escaped easily?'

'I was brought back to life when I had been dead, so far as any one could tell, several hours.'

'Were you unconscious all that time?' the artist inquired.

'Utterly so,' he answered; 'and coming back to consciousness was far more dreadful than the pangs of drowning. I left half my vitality—the best half, I think—behind me.'

Glanville hastily spoke what was in his mind: 'Is that why you feel so unconcerned?'

'No,' said the other, who seemed incapable of taking offence; 'I think life itself is the great shipwreck. Existence is made up of pain. It is always and everywhere pitiable. And we are but spectators till our own turn comes to wear the burning crown and be racked and torn. You cannot help me, and I cannot help you if you stand in need of help. But the sky is clearing now the brave vessel has gone down. Let me wish you good afternoon.'

He stepped out of the porch, and, at the same moment, a gust of wind took his hat and blew it some distance. He ran after it bareheaded, stooped, and caught it up again. As he turned about, Glanville, who had run to his assistance, perceived with strong amazement that the stranger's bare forehead was disfigured with an irregular seam, the evident trace of a sword-stroke. He almost staggered back. It was utterly improbable that here, in this churchyard, a casual visitant should be marked like the hero of the tale he had heard in the morning. It must be Colonel Valence. He pronounced the name aloud, and was answered in-

stantly. 'Colonel Valence? What do you want with him? He is here at your service.'

Glanville blushed and stammered. He could not inform Colonel Valence that in the last four and twenty hours he had learned to know him intimately, though unacquainted with his name before; that he had read a most confidential letter written by him over thirty years ago, and knew the history of the Madonna of San Lucar. Should he tell Valence of the morning's accident to that picture? No, he would tell him nothing. The Colonel saw that a struggle was going on in the young man's mind; and as Glanville hesitated to reply, he said, 'Have I had the honour of meeting you at any time, sir?'

'Never, to my knowledge,' said the artist; 'but—but I have heard your name,—something, too, of your history, of your having fought in Spain when a young man. You lived in this neighbourhood once, did you not?'

'I live here still,' answered the Colonel briefly; 'and now, since you appear to be well acquainted with my name, may I ask the favour of yours?'

'My name is Rupert Glanville,' the young man replied.

'Rupert Glanville!' repeated his questioner, surprised in turn; 'Glanville the artist?'

'An artist, certainly,' said the modest painter.

Colonel Valence seemed for a while lost in thought. 'Are you staying at the town yonder?' he inquired, pointing away to the cliff which hid Yalden from them.

'I am staying at Trelingham Court.'

'Oh, at Trelingham Court!' echoed Valence, without moving a muscle. 'Then I wish you good-day, sir!' And, as if not a word more was to be said, he turned deliberately towards the ascent, and with slow but not feeble steps began his journey homeward, as it should seem, for he faced away from Yalden and Trelingham, both of which lay on the same side of the country.

Glanville looked after him. There was something, he acknowledged, of the stately grace and resolute daring of King Arthur about the man; but what a harsh cynic! how little resembling the idea that, in his own mind, the artist had formed while reading the epistle from San Lucar!

Heroic he might be, and doubtless was; his bearing showed it. But every particle of feeling seemed extinguished by the stern and pitiless philosophy that, in the name of pity, would not suffer him to care for the calamities which overtook his fellows. And so that was Colonel Valence! He was still living, still in the neighbourhood of Trelingham Court. And Lady Alice was dead. In what relation did the two families stand towards each other? He longed to know more of the strange story. The thought quickened his pace as he walked up the hill. But he was cold and tired; the road appeared steeper than ever, and not until some time after the dinner-hour did he reach the front terrace of the Court. As he did so two men wrapped up as for a night expedition, and with lanterns in their hands, ran against him. They stopped and explained that, in pursuance of the Earl's directions, they were just setting forth in quest of him, for his long absence, combined with the fearful storm by which he must have been overtaken, had given rise to great anxiety. 'We should have started sooner,' one of them subjoined, 'but for the accident to Mr. Davenant.'

Glanville was shocked to such a degree that he forgot to thank them for going after himself. 'What accident?' he hastily inquired.

'One that might have been very serious. Mr. Davenant had been out in the lifeboat and had nearly been drowned. He was brought home as soon as men could be spared from attending on the wreck.'

'Ah, there was a wreck!' cried Glanville, and he had begun to question them as they arrived at the entrance, when, catching sight of Lady May crossing the hall, he ran up to her, and begged to know whether her cousin was in any kind of danger.

'I do not think so,' she answered; 'we were beginning to feel more anxious on your account than his. The doctor at Yalden ascertained that there was no fracture, but the shoulder has received a severe strain. My cousin laughs at the notion that he shall not be about the house to-morrow morning. However, we have written to Mrs. Davenant in town. He has been ordered to keep his bed,

and we must see that he obeys. He takes any mishap to himself very lightly—too lightly indeed.'

'And was he out with the lifeboat?' inquired Glanville, feeling very kindly towards the young man, and silently contrasting him with Colonel Valence, not to the latter's advantage.

'Why, it was all Cousin Tom's doing,' said Lady May. 'You shall hear the story at dinner, for'—interrupting herself to look at his weather-beaten state—'you must change at once, Mr. Glanville, and come down as soon as you are ready. Dinner is late, owing to my cousin's accident.' She rang, and instructed the housekeeper to see that Mr. Glanville was treated as an invalid. 'It is the only way to keep you from becoming so,' she added. Under such gracious care did the artist appear at dinner. He looked pale and tired; with a paleness, however, which set off his bright hair and intellectual features to exceeding advantage. He was not so good-looking as Tom Davenant; but 'he was well enough.'

They were a small party. Mr. Truscombe and Lord Hallamshire had gone down to the wreck; and the Earl, who was very fond of his cousin, could not be induced to quit his bedside until that young man was satisfactorily asleep. The only remaining gentleman besides Glanville was an elderly squire, who lived a long way across the moor and had come to enjoy a few days' fishing at Trelingham. He was a good-natured, silent creature, not easily roused to express sentiment of any kind, good or bad; and while he made you comfortable in his presence (which some silent men are far from doing), you could not expect him even to ask a question. But Glanville was ready to ask a thousand; and Lady May and the Countess were only too willing to satisfy him.

He could ask questions, but he could neither eat nor drink. The light and warmth of the dining-room were grateful to him physically, and took away the chill sense of desolation which so many hours in the churchyard, under the pelting storm, had inflicted; but his memory was full of the dreadful sight, and yet more dreadful imagination, which had mastered him while gazing at the tossing ship.

He could not choose but think of it again and again, and, though he knew not one of the human beings she carried, it would prove an intense relief should any, by the gallant exertions of Tom Davenant, have escaped destruction. 'How came Mr. Davenant to be at Yalden?' he asked.

The Countess, who exhibited a curious mixture of excited gaiety and sudden relapses into the terror which had laid hold of her that afternoon, answered plaintively, 'It was partly my doing that he went. For I knew that this week there was to be a salmon-hunt in the Yale; and I have never seen one; and I thought I would get Cousin Tom to instruct me a little beforehand; and so I persuaded him to ride to Yalden for some tackle, because I was to have a lesson in fly-fishing to-morrow. It was all just to understand what fishing is like. Of course I couldn't join in the salmon-hunt, much as I might long for it. But I never thought Cousin Tom would persuade the men to go out in a lifeboat. Oh, May,' she cried, with a piteousness in her voice that Glanville could not laugh at, although he felt there was a comic element somewhere in it, 'are you quite sure that Tom will not be hurt for life?'

'The doctor is quite sure,' answered Lady May; 'don't distress yourself, Karina. Tom will be himself in a day or two, if he keeps quiet,—and if you do,' she added somewhat mockingly.

'For, you see, Mr. Glanville,' the Countess went on, 'he really did put himself into the greatest danger. The men told us that brought him. He would insist on getting alone into the lifeboat and taking it across the bar, as they call it, and——'

'My dear Karina, we shall hardly understand the story if you tell it in that way,' said Lady May. 'Cousin Tom was brave enough, but he was not out of his mind. The fact seems to have been,' she continued, looking towards Glanville, 'that when my cousin was choosing the fishing-tackle for the Countess, in a shop not far from the promenade, he saw people running down to the waterside, and heard them shouting that a vessel was standing-in, showing signals of distress. He thought he had heard a minute-gun discharged; but there was so much thunder that he had

not dwelt on the notion. Following the crowd, he arrived on the beach at the same moment with half a dozen fishermen, well known to him, who were passing the wet afternoon in a tavern close at hand. The air was so full of mist that even with glasses little more of the vessel could be made out than her size, which seemed considerable, and the direction in which she appeared to be going; for she was not standing-in to Yalden, but making for the roadstead to the north.'

'I saw her at that point, I am sure,' said Glanville; and he described how she had repeatedly fired minute-guns and received no answer.

'You could not have heard the answer,' said Lady May, 'had any been given, with the high cliff between you and Yalden beach. But, in fact, there were no signal rockets; and the sailors had only their fowling-pieces. About the rockets there has been, my cousin says, some extraordinary mistake. But to go on with the story. You heard, I make no doubt, an unusually violent peal of thunder, which seemed to finish the worst part of the storm?' Glanville nodded assent. It was when Colonel Valence had given the vessel up for lost, and when she had, in fact, disappeared from their view.

'Well, no sooner had the awful sound died away than the ship came swiftly round the edge of the cliff, as though driven by a hurricane, and made straight for the bar, over which the waves were breaking with the utmost fury. The excitement on shore became intolerable. My cousin had persuaded the fishermen to get out the lifeboat and make her ready for sea; and thus far they were willing, although not one of them but assured him that it could never be launched. By dint of coaxing and commanding, however, launched it was; a crew was brought together, and with immense difficulty they had got her a few yards from land, when she was flung on shore again and stranded. My cousin implored them to try once more; they refused; and it was then that he told them, in a desperate sort of way he sometimes has, that he would venture alone rather than see a shipful of helpless beings perish before his eyes. That shamed them, and, for the second time, as the vessel was

rounding the High Cliff, they managed, with Tom for their captain, to launch the boat and get it as close to the bar as they dared. Further it was impossible to go; indeed, they hardly knew how to keep the lifeboat afloat, when the vessel struck on the bar, and its crew of four or five and twenty —I cannot tell the exact number—was seen struggling in the waves. It must have been heartrending to look on. The lifeboat did wonders. Ropes were thrown out, and nine or ten poor creatures rescued; while, as the sea was now slightly calmer, the rest, who had clung to what they could, were able, all except three or four, to keep floating till a second boat went out. Poor Cousin Tom, however, who had been so active and undaunted all through, was not to come off scatheless. The heavy sea carried the lifeboat a long distance from the point they endeavoured to make. It was driven inshore unexpectedly; and as it touched, a projecting piece of timber struck Cousin Tom on the shoulder, knocking him off deck into the shallows. It is a marvel that he escaped being crushed. He was carried some distance by the returning wave; and but for a young fisher-lad who instantly plunged in and brought him out —— Poor dear Tom!' said Lady May, stopping in her narrative as the thought of his peril came home to her; 'what a brave fellow he is! and how could we have borne to lose him!'

Karina, who had for some time been listening with her hands clasped, was crying like a child, and could not speak for tears. She looked very pretty and innocent so, like a white rose upon which the rain is falling in heavy drops, while the sun lights them up.

Glanville, who felt himself liking Tom Davenant more and more, said, when the silence was becoming rather painful, 'Your cousin behaved nobly. I hope he was not left long without proper attention.'

'He was much shaken,' replied Lady May, 'and confused for a while, but not, he tells me, unconscious. They took him to a little cottage on shore, but he insisted on walking to the doctor's, and when he arrived there fainted. The doctor happened to be at home; he had to decide in a moment whether to leave my cousin or to examine his hurt

before going down to the wreck. However, he gave it in Tom's favour, saying that but for him there would have been no other patients to attend to. He declares that there is only a strain, which will go off, and that nothing is displaced or broken. A carriage was got ready, and came on slowly with my cousin, while one of the men very kindly ran on before, to inform us of what had happened. There was much gentle feeling shown on all sides.'

Again Glanville's thoughts reverted to Colonel Valence. But he would not speak of him. 'Is it certain that any are lost?' was his next question.

'We shall not know till to-morrow, when Lord Hallamshire returns. But I fear that some were lost at the moment of foundering,' said Lady May.

'Do you think their bodies will be recovered? Would they be buried in Trelingham cemetery, if they were?' he asked.

'Yes,' she replied; 'it is the only place at hand. You may have observed, if the storm allowed you to walk about the churchyard, how many graves there are of persons drowned. Shipwrecks are common on this terrible coast.'

'There were not five minutes of clear weather,' he replied, 'while I was in the porch. But I can imagine it is so.'

He would not mention Colonel Valence. Glanville, spending much of his time alone, and keeping his own confidence because he had none to share it, had fallen into a habit of reserve, which often induced him to be silent when he was, as now, living in a domestic circle. What harm could there be in saying that he had come across a man whose name, since he lived in their neighbourhood, must often be heard at Trelingham? However, he did not choose to repeat his disagreeable adventure; and he was spared the temptation, thanks to the Countess Karina, who, in her vivacious manner, was perpetually recurring to the event of the afternoon—admiring, fearing, and hoping by turns as the thought of Tom Davenant's heroism, of his danger, and the many perils he had escaped already on the hunting-field and the river, came uppermost. All this, from the peculiar lightness of accent which distinguished the fair

lady, and the impossibility of a cloud resting long on her transparent brow and sparkling eyes, seemed to Glanville like a fantastic interlude weaving itself up with the horror of the shipwreck and the simple manliness of Cousin Tom. He laughed inwardly, tired and depressed as he felt, at the naïve affection which would not let the Countess be silent. Was she engaged to her cousin? It did not seem so. She was not more than his age, if so much; but there was a tone about her that implied the enjoyment of more freedom than is usual in young unmarried ladies, even when engaged. That she was exceedingly interested in Mr. Tom Davenant no one with eyes in his head could help seeing; not even the placid sportsman, Glanville supposed, who had looked and listened in silence imperturbable during the whole of the narrative, only remarking, when it was concluded, that he knew the man whose stack of timber that was nigh which Mr. Tom had come to grief. He was a sawyer named Frampton, and ought to have taken it away a good week ago to his yard at Plymouth.

'I wish he had, then,' cried Karina. 'Don't you think, May,' she observed next moment, 'that we ought to send up and ask how Cousin Tom is now?'

'Papa will join us in the drawing-room,' answered Lady May, 'and he will tell us.' On which hint the other lady rose, and Glanville was left to the company of Squire Huffington. The squire drank his wine quietly, in moderation, and as with a conscience void of offence; although in the course of ten minutes he did but open his lips once for the purpose of conversation, and then merely to emphasise the delinquency of sawyer Frampton, on which he had before animadverted. 'He ought to have taken that stack away a good week ago,' he said. Glanville could not but agree with him; and after this brilliant dialogue they joined the ladies, just as Lord Trelingham came from his cousin's room. He gave a reassuring account of Mr. Tom, except that he could not sleep long together because of the pain. But a good deal of pain, the nurse said, was better than insensibility at that stage; and the patient took it all as a matter of course, and was very obedient to orders. While the Earl spoke he glanced uneasily at

Lady May, who neither avoided nor sought his observation. The Countess he patted on the head, but otherwise gave her no great share of attention. Glanville went to bed saying, 'I wonder which of them is engaged to Cousin Tom?' But he was too cold and wretched to pursue the subject, and he spent a miserable night, feeling more feverish than he liked to own.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ENCHANTED ISLAND

'DEAR Ivor,' wrote Glanville next morning, 'your friend Rupert has not been slow to seek wisdom at your hands when he thought it lacking in himself. And you have shown as much pleasure in giving as he in receiving; while, which I take to be a sign of perfect friendship, he has never once thanked you. But now, he is going to put your philosophy to the test — not your affection; no, indeed, who could think it?

'My dear old fellow, I want you to give me not advice, but two or three weeks of your existence. I am lost if you do not come to Trelingham Court. You exclaim at the notion; but without you I cannot stay here. You know to what severe fits of depression I am liable; one of them, owing to a misadventure that I witnessed yesterday, has come upon me again, and I shall not shake it off in the mental solitude of this place. Other reasons, curious and important, would have led me to write yesterday. I will explain when you come, and you shall decide whether they would have justified me in asking you to break through your rule and mix in this kind of society. I should tell you that Lord Trelingham, who sends a most cordial invitation, and will be charmed to make your acquaintance, —this *banal* phrase is not without meaning in the present instance,—knows the ways and customs of the artist tribe too well to think of binding you down to formal observances. You may live as retired here and as much at your ease as in your own sanctum. I have informed him so far as was required, of the manner in which you meet the

world, or, to speak more truly, get out of its way. You shall be a hermit at Trelingham, if you will come, and meet only those you like. If you say the thing is impossible, then, Ivor, I must go back to London. To not a soul in the world but yourself would I reveal this streak of madness—for what else can it be? I was caught, by the bye, in a storm yesterday afternoon, have neither eaten nor slept to speak of in the last twenty-four hours, and shall want you if I indulge myself in a slight attack of fever. But what is the use of going on? Send me a line and say I may expect you to-morrow evening. I enclose directions for the journey. RUPERT.'

It was altogether true. Since yesterday morning the reasons for which Glanville would have summoned his friend to Trelingham had yielded to others of a very different complexion. The overstrained temperament of the artist, who works by feeling and imagination where other men are busy only with their hands, was suffering from the combined effects of long hours spent in the rain and excitement consequent on the shipwreck. This latter experience will be understood by any one that has had the misfortune of witnessing a great fire in which lives have been lost. The senses seem all wrapped up in the horror of it; the mind cannot get away from it; the eyes still see what has happened, and have in them a hot sensation. Nor will the impression pass for days. Glanville was feeling a kind of nausea which made it impossible to touch food; and when he woke from such sleep as came to him in the morning, he knew that an old and dreaded enemy stood by his bedside. He called it depression, melancholy, a streak of madness; it was all these, perhaps. When he was younger, at school, he had often suffered from it; but, as he said, except Ivor Mardol, no one guessed that so mercurial and cheery a nature could be hypochondriac; nor was he so wanting in prudence as to let his 'friends' know of the complaint which made him miserable. A man who is to succeed should never acquaint the world that he is sick, or sore, or sorry. He will meet, if he does, with contempt not compassion. There are secrets which

make up the greater part of many a life, but will never be uttered; secrets that explain sudden downfalls, want of enterprise, rashness in the wary, and intoxication in the self-controlled. But the explanation cannot be given, and the world wonders.

Glanville did not send his letter until he had seen Lord Trelingham, and ascertained that he need not delay because of Tom Davenant's illness. The Earl believed that he would soon be right again. He strongly desired to see the portrait of Lady Elizabeth restored to something of its pristine glory; nor was he unobservant of the worn and pallid look which testified in Glanville to the agitation he had gone through. Lady May insisted that he should see the physician who drove over in the course of the day from the county-town to attend her cousin. But the artist firmly declined. He would admit only that he was tired, and that a fire would make his room more comfortable. It was a curious fact, connected with his 'streak of madness,' that, whenever it affected him, he shivered and could not get warm. 'Diminished circulation and intermittent pulse,' the physician would have said, shaking his head a little, and prescribing quinine and gentle exercise. But, unlike most who suffer from slow circulation, Glanville at such a time hated sunshine, and would sit in a chill room rather than face it. What he asked was a fire, and to lie with a cloak about him on a sofa. These moderate luxuries were bestowed on him; and he hid himself away in his den, like a wounded animal.

As the afternoon wore on he thought he must rouse himself and pay a visit to the real invalid, who had only strained his shoulder, and bore it like a man, instead of surrendering to phantasmal terrors from the void inane. Tom Davenant was lying in bed, as near the open window as the nurse would let him. On seeing Glanville he held out his hand, saying how kind it was of him to come, and that he hoped no mischief had befallen him during the storm. A twinge or two of pain interrupted the good-natured fellow before he could finish his sentence. The artist, who admired both his bravery and his unconcern, knew better than to praise either. He merely said, 'Oh, I am all right,

thank you,' and began to inquire about the shipwrecked vessel, where it was from, and how many it carried. I think that by some knack of freemasonry which goes with reserved speech, he contrived to inform Tom, through the medium of these collateral questions, that he looked on him, if he might say so, as an exceedingly fine fellow. Tom, at any rate, was very cordial and communicative. Lord Hallamshire had come up to see him after luncheon, and brought the whole story of the shipwreck. It was an English sailing-vessel, coming home from the Cape, with only three passengers, and a crew, all told, of four and twenty. They had been driven out of their course in a fog, and, intending to make the Channel, had slipped by Land's End, and run clean into the heart of the storm which had been travelling partly ahead of them. No one on board knew the coast or its soundings. When Glanville saw them, it was their expectation every moment to be driven upon shore underneath Trelingham Church; nor did they suspect the neighbourhood of Yalden Harbour, which, owing to the mist, they had never once sighted. A sudden change in the direction of the gale had turned the vessel round High Cliff and on the bar. Long before that, however, she had refused to answer her helm and was rolling at the mercy of wind and tide.

'Twenty-seven on board,' said Glanville, when Tom had brought the narrative to this point. 'And how many saved?'

'Eleven,' replied Tom quietly. 'We did what we could; but the sea was awful. Our boat rescued six, and the other which followed us picked up the rest. Mr. Truscombe will be pretty well worn out by the time he has seen to the survivors and buried all that may be thrown on shore. He is down there now; Lord Hallamshire left him in the midst of living and dead, for the poor things that were saved are quite destitute.'

Glanville started. 'Thank you for reminding me,' he said. 'I will go down and see whether I can be of use.' And in ten minutes he was riding along the avenue on his way to Yalden—not as one that hurries in vain-glorious mood to proffer his aid, but ashamed that he had

waited for another to rouse him. He reflected with surprise on the likeness between his own depression, which kept him lying on a couch all the morning, and Colonel Valence's despairing philosophy, which looked with dry eyes at a perishing crew. He could excuse himself only by saying that melancholy was his complaint, that it prostrated his courage and benumbed his faculties. But what did he know of Colonel Valence? He rode on, and reached Yalden in a more tranquil, though not less melancholy frame of mind. For it was only as he went to and fro by the side of the good clergyman, ministering such help and consolation as he could to the survivors—who were all much distressed in mind and body—or assisting with his own hands to lay out the remains of the dead,—only then, amid these dismal surroundings, did he feel that the dark spirit was loosening its hold on him. Mr. Truscombe would not let him stay all night, as he proposed, but sent him back to Trelingham, where he arrived late, to encounter the kindly reproaches of the Earl and his daughter, to take a hasty meal, and to lie down tired, but not altogether miserable.

Next day a telegram announced that Ivor Mardol might be expected by the fast train which, two days previously, had brought down the artist and Tom Davenant, and was obliging enough in that way to open our story. Lady May inquired whether he would at once take up his abode in the hermitage. But Glanville assured her that such a proposal directly made would frighten him into the severest observance of the proprieties, although to his exceeding discomfort. A life in the hermitage would be best for him, no doubt; only, like a bird, he must enter the cage of his own accord. He was the sort of person that, from intense shyness, refuses what he knows to be pleasant, and what he would much like to accept. 'But,' continued the artist, 'please, do not think him unmanageable, or morbid, or, as perhaps my account of him has led you to believe, in any way ridiculous.' Lady May declared that she was far from dreaming of such a thing. 'I do not wonder,' she said, 'if original people—in a society of portentous dulness like ours, where the outside is solid and the inside hollow—have to wear a mask. They cannot help being shy, because they

are always solitary; conversation as it goes on around them must sound like the cawing of rooks. I honour Mr. Mardol's shyness. It seems to be founded on genius and character, not on the fear of man's opinion.'

'It is founded,' replied Glanville, 'on absorption in the greatest thoughts, which often makes him disregard little things when he should be attending to them. He does not wish to be or to appear singular; but his exceptional gifts make him so; and he is startled into shyness, when the difference between himself and others comes out.'

'You say he is learned?'

'Beyond comparison the best-read man of my acquaintance. Speaks half a dozen languages, understands as many more, and is at home in all literatures.'

'And his profession—is he skilful in it?'

'A most sure and delicate touch. His eye quick in discerning the finest shades, and an equal lightness of hand in rendering them.'

'But why is he not celebrated? Has he no ambition?'

'I do not think he understands the word. He earns money and gives it away; talks to me when he wants society, or goes among the working men in his neighbourhood; travels occasionally in a modest way; can bear his own company for months at a time; and would expire with shame if any one pointed him out in the street. Is there not a Roman poet who calls that the summit of ambition—to be pointed at as you go along? It would kill Ivor Mardol. I think he would give a gallery of his finest prints to buy the cloak of darkness they tell of in fairy tales, and go about in it unseen.'

'Your friend is a phœnix, not an engraver,' said Lady May, smiling. 'I shall be curious to see him. But is he, then, to be accommodated with an ordinary guest-chamber, like any other mortal?'

'For to-night and to-morrow I think it will be wisest. Afterwards, I will ask you to show him the hermitage.'

In this way Ivor Mardol came to Trelingham.

If Lady May Davenant had expected to discover in his outward appearance tokens of the rare excellence within, she must have been disappointed when Glanville

presented his friend to her. Without showing any trace of the 'half-breed' which her cousin had fancied him to be, he looked a man whom you might easily pass in the average. His height was not commanding, nor were his features handsome. By the side of Glanville he looked plain and slight. He was very thin, stooped a little in the shoulders, walked negligently though not without ease, and for some time hardly lifted his eyes from the ground while his hostess addressed him. When he did so, however, he showed a countenance that, in the manly expression of Robert Burns, 'had received its patent of nobility direct from Almighty God.' Intellectual distinction gave his dark and rugged features a stamp that you might seek in vain among the crowds wherein he would so readily have been lost. There was a steady look in those penetrating eyes, an attentive pose of the head, a resolution in the attitude, an absence of the slight nervous motions associated with ordinary shyness, that told the spectator of a man whom it would be dangerous to grapple with and hard to overcome. He spoke in very brief sentences, and very little, turning his gaze rather upon Glanville than Lady May, with an air of affectionate anxiety that did not escape the latter. What he did say was to the purpose, phrased with admirable clearness and decision, but in no sense over-confidently; and his subdued voice had the resonance which indicates that the speaker possesses one, and that the most persuasive, of the gifts of oratory. Glanville's delighted ear made him sensible of the contrast and harmony which these two voices produced. 'How well they would match in singing!' he said to himself. The commonest tones in Lady May were of a certain grandeur; if you listened, you could not but experience a thrill of admiration. Ivor Mardol, on the other hand, suggested in his voice all that was keenly passionate and caressing; it was light and high rather than deep, the music of a reed-pipe, not of the swelling organ-stop. One was reminded of an English song-bird, singing on the topmost bough when winds are hushed. Or to speak more precisely, such was the similitude that occurred to Lady May, when Ivor, forgetting himself in the presence of the view that lay extended

before the drawing-room windows, began to talk at his ease. The qualities of his speech may be summed up in this, that he said nothing for effect, that if he spoke at all, it was on his part thinking aloud, and almost (that there should be no difference is impossible) in the words he would have chosen had he been alone. Sincerity and directness in talk are among the lost arts in civilised life; and to fit them in with its requirements is not less rare than to possess them. We are trained to make language hide thought and the want of thought; and the more refined our conversation the nearer it approaches to an algebra of which every man keeps the key in his own bosom. Our words express little or nothing, and they imply no more than we find convenient. Now, Mardol, I do not say spoke all that he had in his mind,—often he kept silence even from monosyllables—but what he did speak had a picturesque force and a high relief which made the language of common men insignificant. Instead of showing you the painted canvas, he seemed to show you the lion. This, perhaps, made it undesirable that he should be much in polished circles, where lions, and, much more, badgers and jackals, are hinted at rather than spoken of, and never introduced to evening parties. But I am fallen on a vein of moralising. Let us to our story.

When the great storm was over, and the sky once more visible in cloudless calm, the summer, as though rejuvenescent, continued many days bright and serene. The verdure had never been more tender, nor the purple bloom of the heather more enchanting; not a leaf hung yellow on the branches, nor did the petals of the roses fall until fresh buds were springing to take their place. All day a mild and tranquil splendour dwelt upon the waters, which, rippling under a soft breeze, rolled in musically over sand and pebbles, or plashed with murmuring sound against the rocks. Only Glanville, in the midst of that fair landscape, gave a thought, oftener than he would, to the gray cemetery where beneath one large mound, marked as yet with no inscription, lay hidden what the waves had cast up. His melancholy, assuaged by the coming of so dear a friend, was yielding to other sentiments—to the affection

which Ivor's presence inspired and was ever drawing forth in brotherly act, to the desire for work which he felt again lit up in him, to a real and growing attachment, of its own kind, but very genuine, to the Earl and Tom Davenant; perhaps also to a feeling which he would not define, nor altogether admit, towards the daughter of the house into whose company for hours every morning he was thrown. Do not be hasty, reader; you are acute and have a practised eye for possibilities; but you know as little about the matter as Glanville did himself. Have I dropped a hint that he was beginning, dimly, to think of Lady May as not merely a model for the restored countenance of her ancestress? Be it so; but I have gone no further. His mind was interested, his fancy—a young man's fancy, ever on the wing—was drawn in the direction of this rare exotic flower, planted in our northern clime. So much I do confess. Beyond that, let all be uncertain.

On being introduced to the picture-gallery, Ivor at once recognised the Madonna of San Lucar, which he called, however, by another name—the *Virgin of the Seraphim*, from the messengers arrayed in kingly vesture and moving as on wings of light, who heralded therein the ascent of the crowned lady towards the empyrean. It was attributed to an otherwise unknown monk, Fray Raimondo, whose works, though not numerous, exhibited the union of high artistic skill with transcendent mysticism. Lord Trelingham inquired whether a copy of the picture was extant. He received for answer that only one such had been set down in the catalogues—a copy in debased style which, taken from the Escorial by French soldiers, had since found its way into Russia. There the record broke off, nor was it possible to say who was its present owner, nor, consequently, to ascertain in what condition, after so long a period, it might be. His counsel, Ivor went on, would be to set about restoring the canvas immediately,—which he offered to do on the ground that his experience in the rougher technicalities of art had been considerable; and that, while he was so engaged, Glanville should execute a portrait of Lady May, from which afterwards the countenance of the Madonna should be painted in. If this did

not prove satisfactory, a replica of the original might be attempted. The entire undertaking was delicate and hazardous in the extreme; but Lord Trelingham could not surrender his hope of preserving in this way one of his rarest treasures. He consented, and the sittings began.

To find a place for them was easy. The picture-gallery suggested itself at once. It had light and space, and would furnish a morning-room for the Countess or any other that chose to look on. When he painted Glanville was not disturbed by conversation; and he cared not whether he were *tête-à-tête* with Lady May—except in the artistic sense—or had a company about him. He felt no embarrassment in her presence and as little in theirs. Brush in hand, he could maintain a discussion when painting a portrait, though not while engaged on landscape or the grouping of figures. With Ivor it was otherwise. To him silence and solitude were as necessary as fresh air and open windows. Nor dared he bring his mechanical appliances into the splendid gallery. Lady May, whom with characteristic modesty he consulted through Glanville, suggested, as though it were an inspiration, the chalet. He had not seen it, nor had his perfidious friend.

'Then you shall at once,' replied Lady May, and she laid her hand on the Countess's shoulder, where that pensive beauty stood gazing at large out of window lost in sad thoughts of Tom Davenant's captivity in his room. 'Come, Karina,' said her cousin, 'a truce to your reveries; they are really becoming a mania. We are going to visit the chalet, and these gentlemen will accompany us.'

Karina sighed, looked at the gentlemen with a mournful sweetness of expression, which implied not regard for them, but regret for the absent; and suffered herself to be led away. Since Cousin Tom was not there it mattered little where she went. Mr. Rupert Glanville, who had never felt the pangs of disconsolate love, was exceedingly amused, though his speech bewrayed him not. All he did was, as they went along, to ask the Countess a number of indifferent and worldly questions, not bearing on the illness of Tom Davenant, and to watch how her mind slipped away from them. She answered at random; and he

secretly enjoyed her blushes when she found she had been talking nothing to the purpose. Her ordinary state, whereever Mr. Davenant's image did not occur, was one of serene self-control; and now she felt vexed at herself and annoyed with Glanville, whose frivolous chatter (for so in her wrath she termed it) made her trip into these ridiculous mistakes. She answered him soon with yea and nay, letting the words drop from her lips as they might, and fell to plucking the petals of a rose she held in her hand till they were scattered on the pathway.

'You will have to leave the gravel and follow this track over the grass,' said Lady May, when they had descended for some time. 'The path we are on,' she added, in an explanatory tone to the artist, 'goes winding about till it reaches the upper terrace again. There is a short cut through the rather tangled brake, which will take us first up and then down into the glade where the hermitage stands. Are you afraid of the wet grass?'

'We will follow you, Lady May,' said Glanville. 'But the Countess?' and he turned an inquiring glance on the Lady Karina. She looked down at her boot and across at her cousin. 'I think I will go back,' she said; 'I don't like walking over wet grass,'—to which she subjoined in a reflective manner, 'and I may be wanted at the house.'

'Nonsense, my dear,' cried Lady May; 'who could want you? My father is in his library, writing a tract on the connection between the medieval reredos and the mosaics of San Clemente at Rome.' She endeavoured while saying these words to look serious, as a daughter should, but her eyes would brighten in spite of herself. 'You know he cannot bear to be disturbed. There is no one in the place but Tom, and we have promised, if he is awake, to pay him a visit at two o'clock. Come, Karina; you don't mind the grass more than I do.'

The unwilling victim bowed her small fair head, and followed in the train of this haughty Zenobia. Neither of the gentlemen could lead the way, for they did not know it. The track along the grass became fainter and soon disappeared altogether; but they saw an opening in the shrubs, which here flourished luxuriantly; and with more scram-

bling through briars and rending of garments than Lady May expected, they ascended the side of a thickly-wooded ridge, where they could see no distance before them and only a long clear strip of blue sky overhead. The morning was fresh and balmy; an abundant dew brought forth on every side a fragrance as of paradise; and the smell of the stone-pines which rose on the low crest had that penetrating sweetness, so keen and exhilarating, which is like a sudden breeze sweeping inland from the sea and laden with its odours. But there was no view on the crest; it was all a thicket growing high above their heads. A rugged descent, where the pathway turned continually to avoid the huge masses of rock that lay across it, brought them, still under dark boughs, half way down on the other side. The wildwood trailed off to right and left; the last of the stone-pines fell into the rear; and a cry of delight from the gentlemen showed that they were rewarded for their pilgrimage by a lovely view.

They were standing on the lower side of a gorge not more than thirty yards wide; and over against them rose a steep and almost inaccessible wall of verdure to a height which, though in perpendicular measurement it could not have exceeded three hundred feet, looked noble and imposing; while the close-set vegetation and bosky undergrowth gave it a soft beauty of aspect to which the firs, standing in long rows at the summit or springing abruptly from the sides, added a touch of ruggedness. At their feet, almost hidden among the trees that fringed it, ran a clear brown stream, sparkling a little way off in the sun, and as it descended the valley broadening till it might have borne a small boat, if the stones over which it swirled in diamond-like mist did not proclaim it dangerous to launch anything on the troubled waters. The gorge turned at a sharp angle on the side over against them, but on their own fell away more gently, melting by degrees into the wide expanse of moor, and allowing a dim and distant glimpse of the sea above Yalden. They could see the wooded height over the stream stretching towards fresh woods and fresh heights. But their gaze was speedily drawn up the valley, and a second exclamation of wonder followed upon their discovery of

its new and singular charms. The apparent source of the stream was a large piece of water, lying in view where they stood, but more of it, as they perceived on going a few steps, spread out behind the ridge that served them as a coign of vantage. It was an irregular sheet, formed by nature, and hemmed in by the granite cliffs which, coming out bare to the north, did not allow it, except for about sixty yards, to present a wide expanse. Here it filled the valley from side to side. Deep in its placid bosom were reflected the fleecy clouds set in a great blue sky, the rising wall of verdure, and the dark granite crags which, by their fantastic shapes and riven sides, reminded one of a castle in ruins which has a tower or two still intact. About midway between shore and shore, standing up in the water and anchored, so to speak, in its own shadow,—which came out foreshortened in every variety of peak and overhanging roof, —itself a picture of balconies, outside staircases, ivy-mantled porches, glistening windows with creepers falling over them, was visible, in the clear stillness of a summer morning, the object of their expedition. With delighted looks they beheld the Hermitage.

'It is a scene of fairyland,' exclaimed Rupert; 'an enchanted island, where the Sleeping Beauty should be dreaming away her hundred years till the Prince comes to waken her.'

'That was a palace in a garden,' said Ivor, who could not turn from the exquisite vision, but for the moment had lost his shyness; 'a palace with thickets of roses fencing it all about. Whereas this, which you called a chalet,' he just glanced towards Lady May, 'is a lake-dwelling, such as was intended, though he had not tools or skill to realise it, by pre-historic man.'

'One feature it has in common with the lake-dwellings,' remarked Glanville. 'There is absolutely no way of reaching it except in a boat.'

'No,' answered Lady May; 'and even that is at the discretion of the hermit. For, if you notice, the steps which descend from that projecting ledge, or floor of the verandah, are fastened merely by rings, and may be drawn up when the lake-dweller pleases. It was a fancy of my grandfather's. The architect wanted a bridge on this side; and

in wet weather it would be a convenience, for the lakelet is stormy enough at times. But my grandfather had a model, "in his mind's eye," he used to say; and nothing would persuade him to allow the bridge.'

'He was right,' said Glanville; 'there is something impressive in the utter isolation of such a dwelling. It seems to belong to another world, to be "an exhalation from the watery deep," a fixed vapour, taking the appearance of things we know, but ready to dissolve at a breath.'

'Is that poetry?' inquired the Countess, with a simple air. 'All I can see is a cottage made of little church roofs and old planks, which must be damp in winter.'

This original account of a lake-dwelling made them all laugh, except the author of it, in whose opinion, as she declared poutingly, it was much nearer the truth than Glanville's 'exhalations' and 'fixed vapours.' She was proud of being matter-of-fact, and said so. A stray reminiscence of Cousin Tom, however, gleamed upon her as she spoke; and Love contemptuously shook his light wings when she repeated that 'she liked matter-of-fact people.' Was the young gentleman up at Trelingham Court 'matter-of-fact'? was he not—— but there is no need to pursue her meditations. She laughed at herself in a minute or two, though she took care to wait until no one was watching.

There was a small boat-house on each side of the lakelet. The party entered a tolerably-sized skiff which they found under shelter, and Rupert and Ivor Mardol took the oars. To make up for her little outbreak of pettishness, occasioned solely by a love for matter-of-fact people, Karina insisted on steering. She was not a creature to bear malice. The water was very still, and so warm and pleasant that they lingered on their mimic voyage to bask in the air and take a steadier look down the valley, which, seen from this point, appeared high and narrow, with the broad gleam of the sea and an intensely blue sky over it, for a perspective. No habitation save the lake-dwelling could be discerned; the belt of tall brushwood under the lee of which they were loitering hid Trelingham Court; and the purple moor was shut off by the ridge they had descended. A more lonely, a more beautiful, a more tranquillising scene, who could

imagine? They forgot to praise and were silent. Even the restless Karina felt its subduing influence; much more did her cousin and the two friends. Transparent light brooded on the glassy depths which no ripple stirred, and seemed to dye the surface with a thousand emerald tints, bright or dark, as it reflected the rich vegetation that, embowering the hillside, crept down to the edge of the mere, and threw out straggling branches to the water-lilies floating on its bosom. A trance at noon-day fell upon our pilgrims; they dreamt with open eyes.

'Does no one live in the chalet? or is it abandoned to pre-historic man?' asked Rupert, in the light tone which sometimes indicates that thoughts too solemn for speech have passed through the air.

'My father used to spend a day there formerly, but he finds it too cold,' said Lady May. 'My cousin, too, when he wants a little quiet fishing, has it put in order, and will not come up to the Court for a week if the weather favours him. It is an excellent place for trout;' and I am told, though it seems hardly credible, that salmon find their way up that rocky stream. It has deep holes in it where they can lie at their ease. When they reach the lakelet, I can fancy their enjoying its depth and coolness before starting on their journey seaward again.'

'It was here,' said the Countess plaintively, 'that I was to have taken my lesson in fly-fishing.' Her grief returned at the thought.

'Well, you may take it still,' said Glanville. 'Mr. Davenant is recovering; and if he cannot join the next salmon-hunt, there will be all the more reason why he should come here to throw the fly.'

This was an expectation to caress and make much of. The Lady Karina began to steer again with a lighter heart, and forgave Glanville. A few strokes brought them to the side of the Hermitage. The waters were still swollen, and their skiff rose to the middle round of the ladder. A chain hung down over the verandah for the oarsmen to seize; the boat was made fast to it; they ascended with quick and easy steps, although the feeling was much like that of getting up a ship's side, and were soon assembled, without

a wet foot or other mishap, on the floor of the verandah. The chalet was built somewhat like a cabin on the main deck of a steamer. Round it was a broad open space, paved with coloured woods, and overhung with a sloping roof to keep out the rain. Casements fitted in made this a comfortable promenade, or deambulation, as the Romans called it, in wintry weather. They were now standing wide open, shaded by the too-abundant creepers; but the house was airy and dry, furnished with simplicity, as became its pretensions, but the details carried out in admirable taste. There lacked nothing to the hermit's comfort: his study, fitted with volumes of the poets and books on fishing; his sleeping apartment, contrived with a pleasant outlook towards the morning sun; his dining-room, bright and cheerful as the scene of temperate enjoyment and philosophic mirth should be; his small but elegant kitchen, copied, as to its decorations, from Pompeii; and a guest-chamber in the snuggest corner of the house, sheltered from wind and storm by the hills which looked down upon it,—these, with a watch-tower, skilfully perched up among the gables, made a lake-dwelling at which the heart of the troglodyte would have rejoiced. But Ivor Mardol was no troglodyte; he had not hitherto dwelt in a cave; and his heart laughed within him, to use an Homeric expression, when he thought of exchanging, for at least a few hours every day, the splendours of Trelingham Court for this lovely, lonely hermitage. He stood in admiration, above all, of the kitchen, a temple of ideal coolness, contrasting with the fiery dens wherein our meals too commonly are made ready at the expense of temper and religion. But Rupert, although he praised what he beheld, inquired after some reflection:

'But where is the servants' accommodation? I don't perceive any.'

'What!' cried Ivor, looking at him with large eyes, reproachfully. 'Do you imagine that a hermit has anybody to wait on him? Where would be the charm of solitude, if another human being dwelt and cooked within these walls? For my part, I should flee out of them and build myself a hut in the wood over against us, did such a demoniac presence come to trouble me.'

The grave earnestness wherewith Ivor delivered this protest amused Lady May, and she laughed more heartily than Glanville had known her to do. He laughed with her, and for some time nothing serious could be said. At last the lady, whom Ivor was now looking at, not as rebuking her, but as wondering that she should laugh, recovered herself, and said:

'But you are very right, Mr. Mardol. When my father stays here he brings a cold luncheon with him; and Mr. Davenant—as my grandfather used to do—not only catches his own fish, but cooks them, and will not allow a servant to come up the ladder whilst he is here.'

'I surrender, said Glanville, 'to such examples; and I grant the romance of the thing, provided one knows how to cook. Do you, Ivor?'

'*Qui nescit coquere, nescit regnare*,' replied Ivor. 'How should a man be lord of himself that has not full dominion over a mutton-chop? I learned the art long ago. For me, a kitchen, especially when it is redolent, as this, of Pompeii and Hadrian's villa, has no terrors, but a charm unspeakable.'

'Then,' said Lady May, 'if you can be satisfied with the light, you will bring the canvas hither, and enjoy that perfect freedom which I know you prize. But I hope you will give us the pleasure of your company at dinner as often as possible. However, both then and at all times you must look upon yourself as unshackled by our formal ordinances. You see, Mr. Mardol, I have learned how great a lover of solitude you are.'

'But,' he replied, 'do I really understand that it will not seem strange to you if I spend a day or two in this cottage and do not dine at the Court?'

'Certainly,' answered Lady May; 'we know it will give you pleasure, and it will therefore please us. I think Mr. Glanville touched on this point in conveying to you my father's invitation. We could not dream of inflicting on you the captivity which is often another name for staying in a country house.'

'This is, indeed, most kind,' cried Ivor; 'more than I dared imagine, much less propose. I have lived so

long by myself,' he continued apologetically, 'that it makes me wretched to be in any company—even in my friend Glanville's—for a whole day without a break. I will not abuse the freedom you bestow on me. But it is delightful.'

They mounted the quaint staircases that led in the open air from one verandah to the next, and from that to the watch-tower, wherein was a chamber having windows in the four walls and a different landscape visible through each of them. At this height the sea became a vast sheet of gold, on which the waves, not otherwise to be made out, shone like an endless tracery where every point sparkled and the finely-curved lines were interwoven as with a needle. The brightness was intolerable, the radiance golden, like clear glass. 'If you could dip your pencil in that,' exclaimed Ivor, addressing his friend, 'you might paint with molten sunlight.'

'Ay, indeed,' returned the artist; 'it puts one out of conceit with painting, when we know that a sheet of white paper is the most dazzling brightness we can attain. Here is the crystal sea, shot through and absolutely bathed in a fiery element which the eye cannot bear to look upon. Will any canvas render it?'

'How dark the ships come out in all this light!' said Lady May. 'The white sails seem lost in the overpowering radiance. All one can perceive are the heaving hulls, like lines of ebony crossing the gold. Cannot you fancy creatures of a finer make, with slow-moving pinions, traversing that shining space, or treading its pavement, which seems all ablaze, on errands to a distant world?'

'"He maketh the winds His messengers,"' said Ivor in a musing tone. 'What deep sayings there are in that old Hebrew book! Not slow-moving, though majestic in their march, and irresistible,—the four winds, angels between earth and sky,—binding one element with another. It is the life of Nature exhibited in vivid allegory.'

'Do you think the angels an allegory?' asked Lady May, not like one surprised or shocked, but as seeking to know his opinion.

'I think,' he replied, 'that Nature is a living miracle, not

a dead machine. To me it is full of eyes which are always gazing into mine.'

'And these are angels?' she said, bending her own eyes upon him earnestly, and forgetting that they too might scorch and burn.

'You may call them so; why not?' he answered. 'Through them I discern that all things are known to one another and reflected, as in countless mirrors, from world to world."

You remind me,' said Lady May, 'of the famous verses in Faust;' and she repeated them:

'Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen
Und sich die goldnen Eimer reichen!
Mit segenduftenden Schwingen
Vom Himmel durch die Erde dringen,
Harmonisch all' das All durchklingen!'

She recited well. The artist could not help admiring her. People are commonly shy of repeating verse; she did not mind. 'How finely Goethe renders our modern thought!' said he.

'Yes,' replied Lady May; 'I don't think the worshippers of angels would recognise their creed in him.'

'What matter?' said Ivor.

They were forgetting luncheon. The Countess, partly because she was hungry, and yet more from a dread that in lingering so unconscionably they would be leaving no time for a certain visit as a sister of charity in the afternoon, reminded them of the fact. 'I don't see any angel coming to us with a golden pail,' was her comment on the Lady May's quotation. Had we not better be going towards luncheon? It is past one.'

Thus admonished they came down from the watch-tower, embarked in the skiff, and shot rapidly across the water. Glanville moored the boat where they had found it; and, avoiding the brushwood and the stone-pines, they walked, at a pace to satisfy the Lady Karina, along an easier path, which brought them to the front terrace. They were all tired, yet delighted with their morning. An appetite for luncheon is a blessed thing; each of them was so seasonably graced; and even the sad brows of Glanville, where

gloom put on a cloud from time to time, unbent at the merry meal. His friend, of more equable temper, felt that his happiness had no alloy. He was still in thought on the watch-tower, looking over the golden sea, and contemplating the white-winged messengers as they moved about it. Once or twice a pair of dark eyes glanced in upon the vision and faded as quickly as they came. He had seldom enjoyed a morning so much. Ah! Ivor the philosopher, beware!

Next day he took up his abode at the Hermitage.

CHAPTER IX

ANIMUM PICTURA PASCIT INANI

Now that Destiny had got a number of threads in her hand, on every one of which hung a human life, she proceeded, with the haste and fury of a seemingly blind inspiration, to entangle them. It was not merely to paint pictures that Rupert Glanville had come to Trelingham. Little as he dreamt it, the central knot of his fortune was there to be tied; he was to act and be acted upon, to drive and be driven, to be caught up as by a swiftly-turning wheel and hurried round with it. Nor did Ivor Mardol quit his London solitude and find delicious shelter in the Hermitage that he might be satiate with rustic beauty and add a new leaf to his sketch-book. By sure degrees the pleasant intercourse that marked the beginning of their stay among strangers yielded to an intimacy which, at first promising larger gratification, led to the most unexpected consequences.

I have often thought how much turns on the minor personages in a drama, whether on the stage or off it. Had Tom Davenant not been kept an invalid in his room for some three weeks by low fever; had his mother, a woman of the world, not returned to London after the briefest of visits; had the Countess been less absorbed, or Lord Trelingham more observant, Lady May and the artist could surely never have spent hour after hour *tête-à-tête* while she was sitting for her portrait. But the Earl, intent on dossals and mosaics and altar-flagons, had not a moment to spare in the morning, and seldom looked in, although from time to time he inspected the picture with marked

satisfaction. The Countess moved hither and thither in her restless way, came and went, threw in a mocking word when the conversation flew above her comprehension, sat dreaming her own dreams by the window, and, whether from negligence or wilfulness, turned a deaf ear to most that was said. She could not, therefore, be supposed to perceive how artistic discussion and talk upon general topics were giving way to more intimate personal communings, at least on the part of Lady May, and that mischief was gathering. She had her own reasons, perhaps; and we may as well endeavour to find them out.

Look at this little scene. It was a mellow afternoon, and Tom Davenant, weak but convalescent, was sitting propped up in an easy-chair by the drawing-room fire. It was the first day he had left his room. Glanville, at no great distance, was writing a letter; Lady May, engaged upon some trailing piece of embroidery that fell about her feet, seemed wholly occupied in what she was doing, and neither spoke nor looked up; while the Countess, demurely seated where she could keep a charitable eye on the invalid, was wondering how she might persuade him to talk. For it was part of her infatuation to like the sound of that young man's pleasant but not astonishingly musical voice. Her longing was to be satisfied without effort on her side. Tom laid down the newspaper he was holding, and, stifling a yawn, said to Glanville, whom he had come to like rather: 'The worst of being knocked up is that a fellow doesn't know what to do with himself. He can't read anything except the *Field*; and I've read it all through now. I must hark back, I suppose, and see whether I've skipped a page;' and he took up the discarded journal again.

'Shall I read to you, Cousin Tom?' said Karina softly.

'No, thank you,' he answered; adding, after a while, with some annoyance in his tone, 'I wish, Countess, you would get out of that way of calling me Cousin Tom. You know I haven't the honour of being your cousin, and it is stupid.'

The Countess blushed, but attempted a smile. 'I know,' she said, 'I am not so much your cousin as Lady May; but, if I am hers, you ought to be mine.

Don't you think so, Mr.—Mr. Davenant?' The curious mingling of sarcasm, fright, and tenderness with which the Countess uttered his name thus formally was worth observing. Glanville, hitherto intent on his letter, began to feel an interest in the little comedy. He knew nothing of the relation in which the Countess stood to the house of Trelingham; he had never even caught her family name. To the servants she was 'the Countess' and 'her Ladyship.' The Earl and his daughter addressed her as Karina; but Tom Davenant, as it now struck the artist, at all times spoke to her as 'Countess,' and never bestowed on her a Christian vocative. Sometimes, though seldom, he would call Lady May by her name; but this favour was withheld from the light-tongued Karina.

'Don't I think so?' echoed Tom. 'Not by any means. You are May's first cousin, because her mother and yours were sisters. But May and I are related on the father's side. You might as well have argued that your husband was my cousin because he married you. Poor fellow!' concluded Tom in sympathetic accents,—but whether pitying the Countess's late husband (she was a widow then, it seemed) on the score of his marriage or his decease, Glanville could not determine.

'Poor fellow!' sighed the Countess; 'I know you liked him, and he suffered so dreadfully at the last. It is not pleasant dying at two and twenty. But no, Mr.—Mr. Davenant,' she observed, brightening up after her transient expression of regret; 'the Lutenieffs are too proud to acknowledge kinship with any but old Russian families. The Countess Lutenieff never forgave me for being half-English. She threw it in my teeth often enough.'

'Well,' said Tom, relenting, 'if you have suffered in the cause, I suppose it is fair that you should call any English gentleman you choose your cousin. But——'

She interrupted him. 'Thank you so much, Cousin Tom,' she said archly, though with contentment in her looks. 'After all, you will want a cousin when May gives up that dignity.' Tom was silent, but turned his head in the direction of the real cousin. If she heard anything, she made no sign.

'I don't know what you are talking about,' said the young man, when he saw that Lady May paid no attention to the Countess. 'It seems to me that you say whatever comes into your head. I shall go back to my room now and lie down. This fire is too hot, and I can't smoke here if I want.'

The Countess begged him to stay; she would take the coals off the fire; she would open a window so that he should not feel the draught. But her entreaties were unavailing. Tom walked slowly to the door and disappeared.

When he was gone, Glanville, who had not relished the end of this argument, and feared that the Countess—Lutenieff, since that was her name—might follow it up with unpleasant revelations, dashing some faint but idle dreams of his, rose, and passing through the long window, strolled out on the terrace. To what was that mischievous sprite alluding? How could Lady May cease to be Tom's cousin? By marrying him? There was no other way. Glanville recalled her father's look that night when Tom was brought home from Yalden. He had not thought of it since. The cousins were so little together, and his attention had been drawn so strongly to Karina's worship of Tom Davenant, that the idea of an engagement between him and Lady May had completely vanished. 'Well, what if it were true?' he asked himself. 'How did that concern him?' Not a great deal, his conscience replied. Should he feel mortified, or vexed, if the lady wedded her cousin? Why, yes; he must admit it would be a disappointment. But would his heart be broken? Did he feel that life would have lost its sweetness were she married? There was no answering throb. His heart was sound, apparently. He would think it over in the presence of Lady May; perhaps the calmness he felt was deceptive. And so deciding, he approached the window. Scarcely had he come within earshot than the Countess's laughing voice broke on him. She spoke rapidly, and the sentence, complete in meaning, struck at once into his understanding and stayed there. 'But if you don't care for Tom, you must refuse him.' Such were the words. She was clearly addressing

Lady May. Glanville fled to the other end of the terrace; he was aghast at having heard what was not intended for his hearing. To forget the sentence was, however, impossible. The Countess had spoken in loud tones, but her laugh sounded unnatural and her voice was sharp and peremptory. It seemed to insist on a thing which was not certain to be conceded. Could there be an engagement, and Lady May so little anxious about her betrothed, so free from jealousy of the Countess, so much—he paused for the right word—interested in another?

Next day when they were in the picture-gallery, he found himself insensibly leading to the subject. 'It is strange, Lady May,' said he, 'that I never heard the Countess's family name till yesterday.'

'Did you not?' she inquired; 'I can fancy it, however. My Cousin Karina has been so constantly with us from childhood, and her marriage lasted so short a time, that we hardly think of her as a Lutenieff. Her own name, which we never liked, was Karen Zarkoff. My aunt married a Zarkoff; but he need not have disfigured his daughter by calling her Karen. So we changed it when she came to us quite young to Karina, spelling it with a *K* to make it look Russian. She lost both parents before she could speak. Her guardian sent her to England until she was sixteen, and then had her taken back to the Ukraine to marry Count Lutenieff, whom she had never seen in her life. There was no help for it. But she cried at leaving my Cousin Tom, who had been her idol ever since she played with him and me during a summer holiday, when we were all three in this house, as we are now. Nevertheless, she liked her husband after they were married; he was a gentle, consumptive young man, greatly attached to her and to Mr. Davenant, who visited them in Russia. At eighteen she became a widow, and is, in a measure, my father's ward. But she does what she pleases, and is always on the wing; for to reason with her or to keep her in one place is impossible.'

'And Mr. Davenant?' said Glanville, controlling his voice lest it should betray undue curiosity. 'His father is not living?'

'No; he died years ago, soon after his marriage. My father spoke of him the first morning you were here. He married late. Mr. Davenant is strictly under my father's guardianship till he comes of age, which will be in some months. You see,' she went on, 'Mr. Davenant is heir-presumptive to the title and estates of Trelingham; and so,' she said, laughing, 'he requires to be taken great care of. He has a place of his own in the next county, but he does not stay there, except in the shooting season. He will make an excellent landlord, however, when he begins. But at present he is wild about sport. He came to Trelinghan to join in the salmon-hunt which was so unluckily hindered by his accident.'

All this, told in a calm way, was interesting, but it threw no light on the question whether Lady May and her cousin were engaged. One point only seemed certain. Tom Davenant might be the idol of the Lady Karina's affections as much as he pleased, or, very likely, did not please; to the Earl's daughter he was a cousin and nothing more. She spoke of him readily, without changing tone or colour, she lauded his manliness, and at the same time laughingly applied to him the charming words of her poet—

> 'It are such folk that loved idlenesse,
> And not delite hadde of no businesse,
> But for to hunt and hauke, and play in medes,
> And many other such idle dedes.'

That negligent chaperon, the Countess, who had slipped away at the beginning of this conference, now returned; and there came an interval of silence, during which, if many fine strokes were added to the face that was growing perfect on canvas, not a few went deep into the heart of one, at least, in that speechless company.

And now, reader, I will draw away the curtain, and, with such skill as I may, endeavour to disclose the inward meaning of this simple and oft-repeated scene in the picture-gallery at Trelingham Court. What could eyes behold? On the one hand a lady, in the dark crimson, curiously embroidered with gold, which vested the Madonna of the Seraphim, and was here in some artistic drapery imitated,—a lady, I say, seated where the light fell on her

meditative, earnest brow, glowing features, and massive dark hair arranged as in a crown, her whole attitude one of reflection and yet suggesting a concentrated passionateness which, when she spoke or acted, would manifest itself daringly; and on the other, moving lightly about the easel, glancing at the seated figure from time to time, smiling a little as he turned to lay on a colour, and murmuring to himself in the painters' dialect, a young man, of good height and graceful mien, of ruddy countenance too, like the lady, but, unlike her, with the yellow hair of the Norsemen or the Greeks, the sleeves of his velvet coat turned up over fine wristbands, and a certain air of distinction, of dainty though not effeminate carefulness in all his attire, which threw into strong relief the genius shining out of his bright and steady eyes. He was at once an artist, a refined man of the world, and an athletic, well-knit figure of youth and comeliness; one in whom the balance of thought and fancy, of reason and instinct would seem incapable of being overthrown. The shade of melancholy which came, like a passing cloud, across his countenance when he was not speaking added that indescribable touch, that dim sense of the imperfection hidden in all fair things, apart from which we may admire and be dazzled with the splendour of a face, but do not feed our heart upon it.

A pleasant sight, you will say, and worthy of its surroundings in that stately room, where the portraits of three centuries looked from the walls, various in costume, feature, and bearing, yet a gracious assemblage of old and young, of knights and ladies, of warriors, statesmen, ambassadors, recalling confusedly the life of court and camp in which they had acted their part till life's poor play was o'er. In front of the great windows lay the wild moor, beautiful in desolation, framed in the silver sea, which, now at peace, sent up its multitudinous voices in a murmuring chorus that whispered things sweet and strange. The lady sank, and sank, and sank into deeper reverie. She listened to the echoes in her heart of all that had been in the past, began a sentence to let it fall unfinished, and mused upon the many days she had spent alone. She had been asked in marriage —by whom? By men whose birth and breeding, equal to

her own, carried with it an outward semblance of perfection, but implied neither deep feeling nor elevated thought, nor enthusiasm for anything in earth or heaven except their free open-air life, their horses and dogs, their yachts in the Solent and rivers in Norway. Yes, she had not wanted suitors of a different kind either,—solemn-faced men, with brains as unpromising as Nimrod's, but whose narrow vision took in objects less picturesque; her father's friends, lay or clerical, who asked her to share their destiny and help to build schools in the East End, and churches at Earl's Court or Stoke Newington, to weave ecclesiastical garments according to the use of Sarum, and save mankind by acres of broadcloth fashioned into coats of the strictest orthodoxy.

She smiled at the notion; but her feeling was bitter enough. Riches, leisure, friends, the most delightful surroundings had been given her by Fortune. She was a great lady, to be envied and courted. But all these things were the embroidery of life; she wanted the simple greatness which comes of knowing and loving, not a gorgeous frame about the poor *genre* painting, which was all she had to show. How can a woman be noble, she asked herself, except by uniting her life to another which is governed by the highest thoughts? She could have devoted herself to a father, to a brother, if she had had one, provided only he were intent on realising a great ideal. But her father's ideal? It did not tempt her. It was nothing but the digging up of old grave-clothes and multiplication of minutiæ; it was insular, parochial, sectarian. She had long felt that the controversies of little or no meaning which went on in her presence, and to which she was obliged to listen, were driving her in the opposite direction to her father; and, though she would not afflict him by disclosing what had taken place within her, she saw clearly that, perhaps for want of the right teacher, the religion in which she had been brought up had become to her merely a name. It gave her no principles, it had ceased to be the rule of her conduct. She longed for a light from Heaven; she did not remember that it sometimes leads astray. Unhappy she was and had been; dissatisfied, sick with longing for a world of which, in poem or romance, the out-

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line was revealed like a cloud hanging steadfast, shining sun-bathed in the infinite blue. Was it all an impossible dream? Even so, she could not renounce it. To bend her gaze on the earth, and putting her hand into that of a man whose thoughts were fashioned of its gross elements; to travel on and on, over the barren moor, with no prospect before her but the waste and sundown, was to die ere her prime. She was resolved to drink of the fountain of life. She cared nothing for station, and heeded little of the world's judgment on those that descend. Unworthy she would not be, nor undutiful to her father. 'But I must live, I must live,' she often repeated when alone. To sit at the great banquet a spectator; to find every dish enchanted of which she desired to partake; to hear the music and not know its meaning,—this had been her martyrdom, and she could bear it no longer.

I cannot tell what might have befallen Lady May if the higher powers had shuffled the cards otherwise than they did, and not Glanville, but a person of less scrupulous delicacy had come across her in this despairing mood. To represent her as perfect would be pleasant to me; but she was not perfect; she was headstrong, passionate, imperious, and, from the absence of equally determined characters around her, she had, by long habit, become utterly independent of control. She loved her father dearly; but she was too clear-minded to regard his opinions with intellectual deference. And there was no one else. Her cousin, Tom Davenant, she looked upon as a man with the simplicity of a boy; he was her junior by six years, and the thoughts that vexed her would have been to him as unintelligible as the language of another planet. Did she want a chivalrous protector, he would have sprung to her aid; but she wanted no such thing; what she wanted was to go her own way. She guessed her cousin's mind; partly out of consideration for him she was now pausing on the path she had entered; but she did not mean to be affected by his generosity.

When her mother died, Lord Trelingham had thought it right to acquaint Mrs. Davenant with his resolution not to marry again. He wished Tom to know on what he might

count in the future. Tom, who was then nineteen, sought an interview with the Earl, and with unspeakable confusion, but very decidedly, begged him so to arrange that the Trelingham estate might go to Lady May. It was a generous impulse, dictated by a good heart and ignorance of the legal impossibilities which stood in the way. The proposal could not be entertained. But Tom had gone further than Lady May was aware. The young man, finding one door shut, had tried another. He had asked Lord Trelingham to accept a proposal of marriage for his daughter, and to lay it before her when he should judge expedient. He had been brief and manly, saying little of his affection for Lady May, which, however, was apparent enough. He had consented to wait until he came of age; and, trusting implicitly in the Earl's honour, had quietly gone home and shot partridges. That something would be said to her when he was twenty-one, the lady surmised. She had, or soon would have, her answer ready.

For, wandering listlessly through the exhibitions of painting that make London a huge picture-gallery, she had been struck one day with a drawing of extraordinary breadth of power and splendid execution, to which corresponded in the catalogue the name of a young man who had leapt into fame at a single bound some three years previously. For all description of the piece were a line and a half from Wordsworth—

> 'Or lady of the mere,
> Sole sitting by the shore of old romance.'

The rest of the gallery vanished from Lady May. She saw nothing but the wide woodland scene and the dim gray waters stretching away and away till no eye could follow, so distant was the gleam of the horizon, so many the foldings of the cloud which, with a flake of sunshine gilding it faintly, hung like a vision of dreams between sea and sky. There was something weird, ghostlike, unsatisfying in the appearance of that untenanted realm, where the elements reigned supreme, yet were themselves all unsubstantial—dim air, gray water, a hidden sun. But on the shore, her bare feet just touching the waves as they rolled indolently

to where she sat, was a figure, so radiant with life and longing, of such exquisite shape and lovely countenance that the spectator drew back, as if intruding on a queen's privacy, yet was drawn again in wonder to the wistful eyes, full of an intense desire which sought and could not attain its object. It would be hard to express in language the contrast between that eager, throbbing life and the gray visions whereon it was feeding. Had but a youthful knight come breaking through the wild and careless brambles which closed her in on one side, or riding along the green forest path low down in the background on the other, it might have seemed that the artist was reproducing the old tale of Arthur and the brand Excalibur, given him by the lady of the mere. But there would come to this lady no King Arthur; she was beholding a vision unfulfilled—never, on any day, to be fulfilled. And yet how beauteous, how young a life, to be consumed in gazing, to be denied fruition! Lady May read the picture like her own story. She detected in it something which was not medieval, a kind of irony, bitter and sad, not intended by the poet when he wrote his magic verses, but perhaps of a deeper truth; for was not the romance he celebrated an idle thing, dedicating itself to sonnets and madrigals, and the ceremonies of the Court of Love? Behind its wan clouds the sun was shining, eclipsed only by them. 'Unsatisfied ideals,' she said, as she turned away; 'did the painter mean to warn us that Love can be contented only with Life, not with shadows?'

This picture was her book of Hours, her philosophy, for many a day. She lived in it; she saw its every detail, and could have drawn it from memory. As soon as her mind would let her, she begged Lord Trelingham to purchase the drawing; but it had made a great impression and was already sold. The intelligence grieved her like a personal loss, and she began to haunt the galleries where other works of Rupert Glanville's were on view. She had not been deceived in ranking him neither among the votaries of religious medievalism, nor with the school of sentimental landscape, so to call it, which has grown out of the study of the Middle Ages by men whose creed may

be summed up in the words, 'Sin and be sad.' When Glanville chose a medieval subject, he treated it like one to whom larger worlds were known; he was free, ironical, and, as the critics said sometimes, joyously pagan. What he painted was full of life; life, running over at the brim, energetic, bold, adventurous, taking the infinite resources of existence for granted. But his pictures had in them nothing sensuous or over soft; they did not represent joy as the intoxication of a Silenus, still less did they affect the *morbidezza*, the pallid waxen tints which in their excessive refinement denote that the artist has sought beauty in decline and is enamoured of consumption. Glanville's art was healthy; one might almost have called it, to use the philosopher's jargon, optimist. But, as in the drawing which had first made him known to Lady May, so in all he painted, there were suggestions of the infinite unseen, the mysterious and strangely possible. He, too, it was apparent, sought and had not found. His ideal, like hers, was behind the clouds. She came unexpectedly on a small picture of his in a friend's drawing-room, and acknowledged, by the violence of her emotion, that she was falling in love with the unknown artist.

Did she think of subduing her passion, of putting away his remembrance? With all her force of character, and in spite of her wide attainment and unusual gifts, May Davenant was a very woman. She could do much; she could not forget. So, at least, she told her conscience when it warned her against caring about a man she had never seen. Might he not be low-born, ill-educated, anything but charming to look at? this worldly-wise conscience inquired. She did not believe it possible. No, his mind must be equal to his paintings; and what did the rest signify? His mind was himself; birth and appearance, good or ill, were but accessories. However, she would ask and be satisfied. Her father had a multitude of friends in the world of art. She invited one of them to dinner, was very gracious to him in the drawing-room, and put her important questions among a sheaf of others, trivial, but sufficient to blind the deluded artist, who flattered himself that he was always welcome where ladies ruled. 'Did he

know Glanville?'—'Oh yes, had met him several times; goodish sort of artist; made some lucky hits; was rather too *deep* for him, you know, but clever—decidedly.'—'Much in society?'—'A good deal, he should say; met him in the best houses, where he was a favourite; could tell capital stories, not too long; was not bad-looking; sang and played a little; fancied he came from somewhere on the Welsh border—Herefordshire, Shropshire, that way; had been told he was of good family, all extinct but himself; not a bad thing when one's family was all extinct but one's self, provided they mentioned one in their wills, ha, ha!'—'Rich, did he suppose?'—'Why, not, you know, rich, but landed proprietor, that sort of thing, etc. etc.' Lady May, having squeezed this sponge, left him dry, but not discontent, to the care of others; and told her conscience it might now keep quiet, which it did for a while, being terrified at a domineering way she sometimes used towards it. By and by it would take courage and speak again.

She might make his acquaintance, then, if she wished, and ask him to dinner, like his loquacious brother-artist? Yes, and then? How much was she likely to see or know of him in a London dining-room, or during a London season? She wanted more than that. He must be worthy of her friendship; nay, could she be certain that she was worthy of his?

She began to consider. Conscience, whispering maliciously somewhere within, hissed out, 'the Belle's Stratagem.' She laughed; she was in a good humour, and would see whether a stratagem were possible. Glanville must come to the house, must stay with them long enough to reveal his character as fully as she desired. How could it be accomplished? She had got so far in her meditation when Lord Trelingham came to her with the plans which various artists had submitted for decorating their Great Hall. Her father wanted the Arthurian legend painted on his walls, for it was a proud tradition that the Trelinghams were children of Uther. He had long meant to begin the work, and it was now high time, if he was to see it executed at all. The Great Hall, Arthur, Launcelot, the Lady of the Lake! It was all nature could do to stifle a cry. To

hide her feelings May looked at the designs on the table. Not one but was inspired by the *Idylls of the King*—pretty, fantastic, old-faced, so to speak, but the only genius perceptible was Tennyson's. She swept them on one side. 'Mr. Glanville is your artist, papa,' she boldly said. The Earl thought for a minute or two. He knew Mr. Glanville's productions well; strangely enough, he liked them. In design they were bold and clear; in execution, it was agreed on all hands, they were admirable. 'I will call on Mr. Glanville at his studio,' said the good man finally. When the door closed behind him, Lady May sank down trembling on her chair. What had she done?

This was the first of many interviews which Lord Trelingham held with Glanville, who never showed to such advantage as in adapting himself to men from whom he entirely differed. Valuing his own opinions too highly to bestow them on every chance comer, and not preaching them save by the indirect methods of art, the young man took pleasure in observing how variously the world appeared in other men's eyes; and he was therefore attentive to the Earl and charmed him in turn. To accept the commission, though brilliant, was another question. He did not want for money or fame; he hesitated to leave London for so many months as the task would demand; and he doubted that Lord Trelingham would enter into his conception of the cycle of the *Morte d'Arthur*, which was more rugged, primitive, and barbaric, but also of larger scope and nearer, as he believed, to the roots of life and reality, than the current interpretation. To his surprise, the formal ritualist did enter into his thought, —thanks very possibly to Mr. Truscombe, whose volume, then about to be published, had been seen by the Earl in manuscript, and whose sturdy realism had one element, at all events, in common with Glanville's more elevated historical views. Thus encountering no resistance where he had looked for it, and captivated by the mingled courtliness and good nature of the old man, Glanville consented to pay a visit to Trelingham, and, after seeing the Great Hall, to lay his designs (of which he drew out a lucid sketch) before him. He did not propose to call on the

Earl in town; it was a busy time when his engagements stood six deep, and he must add to them if he intended an early departure. Lord Trelingham felt relieved. He had suggested to Lady May, after his first visit, that she should ask the artist to dinner, and she, a good deal to his surprise, had not exactly declined, but put it off, saying that it did not matter and they should have as much as they wanted of him in the country. It was a fancy on her part to begin their friendship away from London, in a less artificial atmosphere. The key-note of an acquaintance is so often struck in the first conversation, and how often wrong! Mr. Glanville would surely come to Trelingham; and, with a light heart, she delayed the dawn of a day whose varying fortunes she could by no means have guessed at. Resolute, however, she was in turning over this new leaf, that looked so fair in its gold-illumined border, of the book of her fate.

She would have blushed for shame had her intention pointed in the direction for which a hard, practical world would have given her credit. So rude and gross are the maxims upon which social arrangements are calculated that the motives of a lady, at the age of twenty-six, and still unmarried, who takes an interest in a young unmarried genius, seem even to the fair-minded, suspicious or self-evident. What can she want except to marry him? And there is much to be said for that view. Nevertheless, she does not always want to marry him; she may be seeking an object of admiration, of worship, which is not compatible at all times with marriage; or a friend to share her better thoughts; or simply a comrade whose amusing manners would be lost outside the circle of a numerous society by the domestic hearth. All this will be conceded by the philosopher who sees in life deeper problems than those of ordinary match-making; but even he, the wise observer, will shake his head when enthusiasm mounts so fast as it did in the bosom of Lady May. She, to her own seeming, had left behind her the 'land of white and green,' the velvet-footed flower-besprinkled valley where youths and maidens choose one another; she was, and meant to continue, an 'old maid.' She did not call it the state of single blessedness; it was only not so miserable as would

have been a life spent with any of the suitors that had come to her. What she did ask, had it ever been possible, was the 'marriage of true minds,' which is the inward grace of all outward union between man and woman. She dreamt now that in Rupert Glanville was such a true mind as she had hitherto sought in vain; but the time of marriage was past. With a sigh she looked back, and once more the land of white and green, the daisies and fresh springing grass, had melted into reminiscences of early youth. Glanville was unwedded; but he might still be her friend, and teach her something better than to feed on romance.

I dare say the reader will experience some contempt for Lady May, on hearing that a friendship like this, pitched just right between high and low, appeared in her eyes a state of life to which she and Glanville might be called. And yet she thought so. Inbred modesty would have forbidden her to take steps towards securing a lover; but how could it interfere with her winning a friend? Conscience, perplexed, though not entirely convinced, lay down to sleep again. The sacred epochs of fashion were passing quickly by. Lord Trelingham, who usually observed these times and seasons as he did Easter and Saints'-days,—although he never had witnessed a horse-race or owned a yacht,—went down early with Lady May to his country-seat, and summoned Mr. Truscombe to advise him in the selection of historic scenes for the Great Hall. Rupert Glanville likewise, as if he were acting of his own free will, and there were no Lady May in existence, took his ticket for Yalden on a certain morning, and, in so doing, burnt his ships. There was no going back the same man that he came.

Thus, at the end of a month, we find these two in the picture-gallery: Rupert, master of himself, uncertain whether he cares for the lady, certain that he does not care with any overwhelming passion; and she already doubting whether to bind herself to friendship and nothing beyond, or yield to this new absorbing influence which is wrapping her all round in its golden haze. To yield? But, if he should think of her only as a friend, would it not be planting a dagger in her bosom, never to be withdrawn? He was

courteous, attentive, full of pleasant wisdom, open as the day. He would have been a perfect brother. Was that the whole of it? She longed and feared and grew uneasy, and could find no rest. She knew, what Rupert, being only a man, was not likely to perceive, that Karina Lutenieff watched them; that she would have encouraged, had she dared, an affection which to her meant the surrender, by her cousin, of Tom Davenant. When the Countess spoke in the drawing-room about Lady May's giving up the dignity of cousinhood, she was moved by a mischievous desire to irritate all three who were sitting there. She had said, petulantly enough, when the gentlemen left, that it was a shame Lady May did not at once refuse Tom Davenant, since she seemed not to care for him. And Lady May had answered, 'Will you not allow me to wait till I am asked?' For though the Countess was afraid, and her cousin suspected, that something would occur on Mr. Davenant's coming of age, neither of them knew of his having already made a proposal in set terms.

There were moments, during these days of bewilderment and growing trouble, when Lady May, as she sat listening to Rupert, seemed to catch glimpses of a nobler order of things, where friendship and not love should be the primal element,—rifts in her golden haze through which the pure heavens were seen like unchanging sapphire, a great, free, illimitable world, passionless, tranquil, clear as the morning dawn. They came when he spoke of the artist's enthusiasm, of his yearning to express the unseen beauty which haunted his steps and whispered in his ear, and vanished so soon as he turned his head to look upon her. Or again, when he descanted on the secret loveliness of landscape, its infinite meanings, its mysterious half-tones, its silent touches lulling the spirit to rest, on the lapse of streams and the glory of foaming waters. While he forgot himself in speaking, she, in her rapt attention, saw the earthly vanish and themselves entering into a unity of which all the love we know is but a trembling shadow. And he spoke of history, of the old classic times, of religion, not as a man largely-informed indeed, but as a true artist, whose eye sees things in their grouping and judges

them by the law of the beautiful. It was the high world she had longed to dwell in. How could she think of marriage if this were not the heart of it, the gold that made it precious? She grew ashamed now, though never before, humbled at the remembrance of what passionate desires she had allowed to come between her and the unsullied light. She would be worthy of him, of his large thoughts and heroic aims; for did he not make of his profession a heroism? After a morning spent like this, she went about her household tasks with an air of gentleness, a countenance so clear and eyes so washed in heavenly dews, that the Earl, moved to admiration of he knew not what that was exquisite about her, would say smilingly, 'You have put on your angel's face to-day, my dear; why don't you wear it always for our delight?'

Alas! she could not. Rupert himself was not always soaring on eagle's wing. He could be melancholy and dispirited; he was sometimes worn out with fatigue of which he rendered no account; for, as I have said, he united to a most winning frankness a reserve that none, except Ivor Mardol, attempted to break into. He was unequal, changeable, or, in his friend's complimentary phrase, iridescent. Trifles irritated him when serious misfortunes left him tranquil. He could be touchy at a word; and although in Lady May's presence he never displayed temper, it was not difficult to perceive that many things tried him. Some afternoons he would make an excuse for strolling out alone, and, going down to the boat-house, unmoor the skiff, leap into it, row across to Ivor sitting philosophically in the verandah of his hermitage, and running up the water-steps like a man pursued, fling himself down on the sofa in Ivor's study, and lie there silent till the bell summoned him to dinner. He returned, for the most part, in good though not exuberant spirits, and said not a syllable of where he had been or what doing since last they saw him. Trelingham was a pleasant house to stay at; for its owner possessed the hospitable grace of providing all things for your amusement and never asking whether you had availed yourself of them.

But these imperfections, proving that the serene spirit

was human, had more danger for Lady May than their joint expeditions in quest of the Ideal. From pity to love is an easy step. She admired, she pitied, she began, despite her interest in the higher friendship, if we may call it so, to love. And mark, reader, for I must tell you the truth as I know it, she felt that, in so doing, she was descending; she did not admire her love, but yielded to it as a disease. I have heard say that falling in love is like falling asleep; it implies a quiescent, not an active will. So was it with Lady May. She felt herself falling asleep; her better resolutions melted away; her fear of consequences changed to an impetuous hope. The angel-face did not return so often; the golden haze thickened and shut out the sapphire. She began to long for an acknowledgment of affection from Glanville, as a fevered man longs for the cooling water. She would die rather than speak; surely she was no Countess Lutenieff to blazon her feelings before friends and strangers; but how slow the minutes moved until that draught was handed her? She kept her secret with an agony like the young Spartan's who felt the gnawing of the fox under his cloak and would not cry out though his vitals were torn. Had men so little perception when a woman was suffering? But could he return her love merely because she suffered? No, she would not have it in such a shape, on such conditions; she would wait and think of that higher world, and—and if nothing came of it, well, she could die. The lady of the lake seated by the dim gray waters, looking on the infinitely unfolding cloud, flecked with faint sunshine, the impenetrable thicket on one side of her, the deserted path away in the green forest behind her;—all the picture came back as when first she saw it, and the same feeling of desolation. Its irony was prophetic, its meaning likely to be fulfilled in her own life with which she was now making a last and desperate experiment.

Timid though she felt in approaching a subject that might betray her emotion, she could not refrain one morning from the inquiry what his meaning was in that composition. He asked her in turn, as was not unusual with him, to give him an account of it; whether it seemed to aim at anything except describing in colour what the poet had de-

scribed in words. She was dreadfully embarrassed, and wished she had not spoken. In a low voice, hesitating at every sentence, she faltered out her surmises, her probably mistaken opinion, that it implied rather a longing for the unattainable than perfect joy in the realms of romance. Glanville, not laying aside his brush while she spoke, gave her a look of contentment from time to time, and said, when she could keep her voice no longer under control and took refuge in silence, 'I did not think to have made the meaning so clear. Either you have a quick discernment or my parable was plainly written. Yes, I did endeavour to convey an ironical suggestion that the beauty of old romance was deceptive, and less akin to the truth of existence, of the perfect ideal existence which it ought to be our aim to enjoy, than were the ghostly mere and its phantasmagoria of clouds to the creative sun. But,' he went on, 'you did not, perhaps, gather a second meaning I had put into the parable. That beautiful lady, who is all desire and wistfulness, seems to be passing idly through her hands the golden hair which has fallen down over breast and shoulders, while upon her knees lies the magic wand, forgotten. She understands, though dreamily, that she is beautiful; she has the rod of life within her grasp. But, charmed by the fantastic visions that pass along the sky, she sits entranced; and her beauty and her magic are of no avail. Were she but to rise and strike the waters, how marvellous a change would come over them! For she is the queen, not the slave of romance; it is for her that its realms were created, and all its uncertain glories do but reflect in weak sentimental imaginations, like those of children, knight-errants, and medieval troubadours, the fulness of her life. I have painted a second picture, where the dreaming fay remembers that once upon a time she was the Lady Venus, the mother of the living and the delightful goddess. For, as you know, these mythologies are all pretty nearly identical in meaning. During the Middle Ages life and beauty lay under a spell; they were bewitched and all things with them. To strike into the depth of existence and fling one's sails upon every breeze, confident that shipwreck in the infinite was not possible,—do

you think the boldest medieval spirit would have ventured it?'

'And can you believe,' she said, raising her countenance to his, 'that shipwreck is not possible? You often speak as though the supreme law were the law of beauty. Granting that, indeed, we need not fear to go upon the rocks.' But, in her own mind, she was far from granting it.

Rupert did not answer immediately. His thoughts went back to Colonel Valence and that forlorn afternoon in the churchyard. He seemed to hear the sad yet mocking tone in which Valence declared existence a universal shipwreck; and it gave him pause. Too large-minded to call a possibility in question because it was disagreeable, he preferred not to dwell upon it. After a while he answered gravely: 'There seems to be a controversy between the artists and the philosophers on this point, witness my friend Ivor Mardol and me. He does not pronounce all things evil, nor do I say they are at their best; nevertheless, I could not paint if I believed that beauty was less than the sovereign law. And he speaks of expiation, the tragic Nemesis, and I know not what.'

'Then you hope the best,' she said, 'although you see it nowhere realised. The lady of the mere is dreaming still; but she may awaken and with a stroke of her wand restore our lost ideals?'

'Yes,' he cried; 'I subscribe to that creed, on one condition.'

'What is it?' she asked anxiously.

'Let it be whispered in her ear that she is dreaming. We are near waking, it has been said, when we dream that we dream.'

'You would imply something I do not quite understand.'

'Well, then, so long as fantastic visions abuse her eyes she cannot resist them, because they are all her world. Let her see, however faintly, a different ideal; in comparing them both she will wake to perfect reason.'

Lady May sank back into her chair and meditated. The unreal vision was love which pined in secret and called

forth no response. The reasonable union between herself and Rupert Glanville could only be friendship, if she saw a way to keep it as intimate as now it was becoming. But no way presented itself. He would marry and forget her. She must return to a lonely life. The days ran on; there was little change in them. And while her own countenance gazed upon her from the canvas, she beheld only the enchanted fay, her eyes full of wistfulness, looking out upon dim waters, upon a mist of weary sunshine, and a world of dreams. Would she ever awaken?

CHAPTER X

COMPANIONED BY DIVINER HOPES

'THURSDAY, —— 18—. It seems only the other day since I took possession of the Hermitage; and it is more than a month. What a gap in these pages! I have never been a careful annotator of the day's work. The less I had done, the less I was inclined to write it; when my hands were full I grudged the time. But this evening I have lighted my reading-lamp, drawn the curtains, stirred the wood fire into a blaze, and, seated where I can enjoy its cheerful glow and feel its warmth, must make an effort, in the only way endurable, to hold up the mirror before me and view therein my counterfeit presentment. The time is propitious. Thanks to Van Helmont and his alchemist forefathers, I have at any rate restored the surface of the Virgin of the Seraphim. My composition, as binding as Roman cement, smooth enough to lay upon it the most delicate colours, and no thicker than a transparent wash, will endure from Rupert's hand whatever treatment he may attempt. Who says that alchemy was good for nothing? or that poring over its obscure and dusty records will bring no reward? If I had not been drawn to them, held by them, lost in them during weeks of seeming idleness, the Madonna would still be a dismal sight, instead of inviting a great modern artist to add the finishing touch, and promising to shine out again among the Trelingham portraits.

'I have done what was required, and should be returning to London when my portmanteau is packed. Do I think of going? No. I must if the Earl does not bid me stay.

But I am confident he will. There is the Great Hall to be commenced now. Rupert's designs will have to be made out, and I can help him better than any one else. Why should I not render him the service he expects? Admirable reasoning, Ivor! And is it what you mean? Come, my friend, be plain with yourself; there is not a soul listening. Let me cross-examine you a little. Now, sir, what are you by profession? A philosopher. Good. It is not the commonest trade in these times. And what kind of philosopher?—do you pretend to know the essences of things, entities, quiddities, and all the rest? You do not? You hold with an uncouth Athenian sculptor, who carved badly, but argued irresistibly, that your business, being a philosopher, is to know yourself and do your duty, not to peer into the mysteries of the gods. Yes, and you consider that a man should rise above his passions and control them, not be swayed as they move. For, you say, they run wild in every direction, all wanting to be satisfied at once, and, like horses that will not obey the rein, each of them pulls the way it would like to go, and is fain to drag the charioteer along with it. Right—quite right. You remember your Greek, I see. But, then, why do you think of staying here?

'Because the place is so beautiful, adapted exquisitely to my tastes and desires. I have travelled, but never dwelt in a lovely region like this. The air feels like home; the waters are ever sounding sweetly or solemnly in my ear, and when they lie down in perfect stillness the calm penetrates my innermost being, and is more delightful than the murmur of ocean. The mind grows clear; the passion for wisdom takes on a more ethereal hue; my thoughts seem larger, and become crystalline in depth and tranquillity. Without violating the secrets of the gods, I lift a corner of the veil of Isis, and fall down in reverence before a loveliness too awful to be disclosed.

'You speak very well, better than some books I have read. And, Ivor, were I not looking so straight at you, I should think this was not only the truth, but the whole truth. Ah, you colour at my insinuation; your eyes droop. I must ask no further. My dear young man, the lawyer

shall give place to the physician, to the father confessor. Tell me what that feeling is which has begun to stir like a serpent in your bosom. I will not vex you, but suggest the healing remedies, if any there be.'

When Ivor Mardol had written thus far he laid down his pen, and, going to the window, drew aside the curtain and looked out. He was in the largest chamber of the Hermitage, called the study, which permitted a view along the gorge and down to the sea. A portion of the overhanging roof had been taken away, to allow of sufficient light for mending the canvas and for such bits of engraving as Mardol might undertake during his leisure. It was a silent, starlit night. No moon was in the sky, nor any cloud. The air, though not frosty, was keen and dry, for a wind came at intervals out of the north and swept noiselessly along, brushing away the evening vapours which lingered about the Hermitage. Everywhere, as he looked, the stars broke on his view sparkling with soft light, not wildly, as when a throbbing seems to take the heavens, but in mild serenity and with friendly glances at the mortal who beheld them. 'The thousand eyes are looking into mine,' he murmured, remembering that conversation on the watch-tower with Lady May. Her dark eyes, too,—he was not likely to forget them. How beautiful and piercing they were! they seemed to look through you. But the light in them was fitful, not serene; it came and went in sudden flashes, startling you as with unexpected questionings. It did not speak of calm or comfort; the deep resignation which that silent night inspired,—how unlike the restlessness, the languor, yearning, melancholy, the fretting desire which their glance quickened into life within him. He was alone now, in the presence of infinite worlds, each an abyss of splendour, a flaming ocean pouring out its waves upon Eternity, unhasting, unresting, bound by obedience to unspeakable laws which might not be transgressed, moving towards a goal that no man should ever behold. Could human passion endure in the greatness of the midnight spectacle? What was it but a little flame springing up out of the dust and dying down in a moment,—a handful of dry heather set on fire and cast into the waters of death?

Should he break his heart because no flame answered his? For a long while he stood motionless, absorbed in meditation. An hour passed, but he did not move; his mind, intently thinking, controlled the muscles of the limbs; as though he were out of the body, his spirit sweeping through the countless worlds, beheld their greatness, their strange magnificence, their lonely spaces where living thing had never breathed nor would breathe, and unbroken solitude had reigned from the immeasurable past Eternity, as it would reign into the Eternity to come. He did not strive to leap the bounds of ordinance and break through the guarded gates into the mystery beyond. It was enough to open his eyes and see what was before him. The longer he thought the more was his mind overwhelmed, subdued, penetrated, cleansed from earthly desires and lifted out of itself. Again, the beautiful face, with its piercing passionate glances, came across the vision; but it had lost its power. It passed by like a falling star, vanishing in the steadfast night of eternity. And the awful silent heavens looked down and were reflected in the waters of the shining mere; and deep calm fell upon Ivor. He drew the curtain again, sat down, took up his pen with a firm hand, and wrote:—

'If hitherto I have been so foolish as to dream of love, and such a love, here is the end. It is not for me. I know my calling, to which, until I found myself at Trelingham, I have never been disloyal. These moments of madness shall not count. Let me recall them now that they belong to the past; let me examine, in the starry light of intellect, a passion to which, as I think, I yielded too much, but hope to yield no more. The most efficacious means of vanquishing a sentiment is, say the wise masters, to put it under the microscope and analyse it to the last fibre. I doubt that a mistress's letters, howsoever tender and eloquent they seem to the lover, would charm or subdue if he read them critically to see where the charm lay. I will pluck up this fast-growing wild rose by the roots, trace the delicate, almost invisible threads which it was insinuating into my heart, and leave it, a beautiful dead thing, perfect but withered, compressed

between these pages. Am I strong enough to be fair to myself, resolved enough not to run a further risk? But should I not still be exposed to temptation, while the warm earth cherished the seed of love? Out with it to the surface; let the light kill it! But in what way? Let me think. This book, so scanty in its record of facts, is abundant in delineation of moods and feelings. I always meant to make it an autobiography,—the travels of a soul towards truth. Why, now, should I not take Carlyle's advice, and set down the story of my life? Why not, like Jean Paul, in that charming brief fragment of his, become the professor of biography to myself? It will bring out the contrast which would make any love of mine for Lady May ridiculous; and I might turn to these pages for a little cooling of my infatuation should it return. The sweet poison must not run in my veins any longer. This antidote shall allay its fury. Do but let me begin at the beginning, and not spare the subject of the story out of misplaced tenderness.

'Ivor Mardol, then, a young man of uncertain age, but, as he believes, verging on thirty, of plain features, less than the middle height, and surely not well connected,—ay, that is the inventory.

'Of my birth and parentage I know less than a workhouse orphan, except that neither can have signified to the world at large; for it is something to be chargeable to the parish. All I know is that, I was brought up by good-natured, affectionate people, who told me I was no child of theirs. The old man taught me to draw, praised my ability, set me to learn what I could, being a mere lad, of the technique of engraving, and took me with him, almost as soon as I could walk, to his workman's club, his trades-union meetings, his political association, his temperance and vegetarian propaganda, but at no time to church. He did not believe greatly in churches. However, I soon learnt that the world was a busy place; and strange to say, I learnt equally soon that I had nothing to do with its concerns. I liked to see and hear human beings. To attend a crowded meeting and listen to straightforward, energetic speeches, interrupted, encouraged, sometimes put an end to, by a vast audience upon whom not a word fell

unobserved,—this was to me as animating as it was instructive. All the arguments I heard were of much the same import; they dwelt on the misery of the masses and proved it by appealing to ourselves. I was not miserable; I had all I wanted. But I knew of some in my own street that had nothing, to whom the charity of neighbours supplied a crust now and then, while at other times they went hungry to bed. Did I feel for them? Have I not often sat down with tears in my eyes to our simple table, because I could not share my little meal with the poor wretches? I pitied, I caressed the tiny children, so begrimed and neglected, as they sat shivering on the door-step near the street lamp, afraid to go into the dark when night was fallen on the huge city, and mothers and sisters had left them at home—left them on what a business too often! That, too, I was not long in learning; the children of the poor know everything. They cannot be blessedly ignorant like those who are fenced round about in luxurious mansions and pleasant gardens whither evil does not penetrate easily. But I have known them, though not ignorant, innocent; though acquainted so young with the ways of life, modest and self-respecting. My teacher might have forbidden me to make friends among these outcast children. He did no such thing. He trusted to the moral influence of the movement of reform to which he belonged; and his trust was not in vain. Deeply impressed as I was, at an incredibly early date, with a sense of the many things, too bad for improvement, that could not and ought not to endure, there was little room left in my thoughts for what was base or ignoble. I have smiled since on hearing it said that children are too young to understand these things. How young was I when the problem of social misery, shouted from a hundred platforms, became to me as real a fact as it is this night?

'But still, it was a problem in which others were affected, and I on their behalf, not on my own. The days of my childhood were solitary, and not at all unhappy. I could have wished for a companion in the evenings; I longed to know my father and mother. There came

rainy hours to vary the long calm sunshine, and, like other children, I wept, even bitterly. But it was seldom. Mr. Mardol and his wife displayed the tenderest fondness for a child who lacked neither discernment to recognise their affection nor the feeling of gratitude that was all he could give in return. I do not mean that he was unloving, far from it; but he knew they were not his parents, and he would have deemed it somehow a violation of the duty he owed elsewhere to love them as such. A curious distinction for a boy to make! He had, in truth, from the beginning a quick and delicate sense for the moral aspects of things, developed by his intimacy with men who were all day long discoursing of the just and the unjust, the rational order of the world, and the inherent defects of existing institutions. I have read nothing in the debates of Parliament or the works of political economists with which as a boy I was not familiar. The handling is not always so good; the amount of conventional falsehood seems to me immeasurably greater.

'Had I lived in my own family, or known what it was to have brothers and sisters, I too must have thrown myself as I grew up into the reform movement. To change the world, one must have a home, a country, a religion. It is that which gives the local habitation and the name, apart from which our aspirations are like the poet's dream—airy nothings. But I had neither home, nor country, nor religion. I had only myself and this kind-hearted philosophy. It charmed my imagination; it roused me at the great meetings to enthusiasm; it did not hinder me from falling back into that solitary world where I was the only figure. I learned much, and with superhuman quickness; I spent hour after hour at my teacher's side, watching all he did, and copying it as he allowed me, always with astonishing accuracy for so young a hand. The good man looked on me, I think, as something uncanny. I must, indeed, have been a weird, elfish creature. And how I went on dreaming, longing, imagining, ever under a presentiment that, sooner or later, a figure would step down to me from the unknown world, and I should enter upon a fresh chapter of existence! Not

that I despised my station, or coveted the rich wares I saw in shop-windows, or thought as I went by the enormous palaces of Belgravia and Tyburnia, that I should like to live in them. My dream did not run thus. I saw myself restored to father and mother, or kissing the lips of a baby-sister, and wandering in the fields, holding my new-found father's hand. An idle dream! But, surely, innocent enough.

'The fresh chapter of existence opened at last, when I was not expecting it. There was one day in the year, and only one, that Mr. Mardol had a fancy for keeping. It was Christmas Day. He did not go to church, and he despised the festive decorations by which his neighbours marked their enjoyment. But, if the day was fine, he took his wife and me for a walk in the green country, which then lay nearer London than it does now. We went just so far as to be out of the clash and jangle of the Christmas bells, but not far enough to lose their delicious chiming when heard in the distance. While we wandered quietly along, my teacher would take up his favourite parable and expound to us the universal charity of Nature; for he never uttered the name of God. He enlarged on the bounty that sends us not only what we may eat and drink, but wise men, in whom there are thoughts by which we may live and learn to care for one another. He told over their names; he spoke of their sufferings, their triumphs, their undying influence; and he chose, as the greatest example, the name which so many in gross and ignorant fashion were celebrating that day. He said a man could do nothing so good as follow His example and labour to change the world in His spirit. Occasionally, he would read a few words from the story of His life; but this was not often, and the only book he would not have me peruse was the Christian Bible.

'I liked what he read; but I did not think of disobeying his wishes. What took up my thoughts a great deal more was the fancy, which I indulged without breathing a word to any one, that Christmas Day was *my* birthday, to be kept sacred by me, to be filled with a vision of home and all that I was by and by to recover of my inheritance of love.

Christmastide for me meant infinite hopes, unquenchable desires. I, too, was to taste the joys of childhood, and be folded to a mother's bosom. While old Mr. Mardol was speaking of the dream of innocence long banished from mankind, or to be found only in the hearts of children; when he prophesied that by the law of progress it would in due time become no dream, but a universal reality, and the age of reason, of obedience to nature, of unpurchased happiness and sylvan delights, be ushered in with acclamation, and terminate the ferocious strife of man with man, by a treaty of eternal brotherhood, my heart warmed within me, and I saw myself roaming the beautiful forest and playing in its sunlit glades, not an orphan or an outcast, but restored to all that loved me and were by me beloved. I could think of no progress but the change from my wintry desolation to a home looking out on the wide world, yet centred in the rustic cabin of my parents. For it was the firm conviction of Mr. Mardol, as of thousands besides, that, when the day came, mankind would pour out of their enormous modern towns, as on the opening of the prison gates captives rush forth in ecstasy, and would never more shut out the air and light of heaven with high walls and crowded habitations, or heap together corrupting luxuries, every one of which was soaked or stained with the blood and sweat of unrewarded toilers. He called the splendid capitals of Europe and America mouths of hell, where flame and smoke ascended day and night without ceasing, and the shrieks of the damned for ever filled the mirky air. But for the sense of duty which kept him where the battle raged, he would have sold what he possessed and gone away, when he was young and active, to the uncolonised lands in which a man might live as nature intended. But it was a task laid upon him, laid upon me too, he repeated with solemn emphasis, to aid in conquering from effete civilisation the countries on which it had inflicted wars and pestilence and famine, and a tyranny as hurtful to the few that exercised it as to the millions who could not shake it off. Meanwhile, we must share the captivity of our brethren, and teach them to forge weapons whereby freedom might be won. I felt that he spoke nobly;

I was eager to follow his lead; but my imagination delighted in the remote continents whose soil was yet virgin, and whose pathless woods owned no sovereignty but nature's. I longed to lose myself in the vast solitude, with only the stars to tell me whether I was travelling towards the equator or the pole; I spent in thought more hours than I can reckon floating down the mighty rivers in the canoe I had with my own hands hollowed out of a fallen trunk,—floating, dreaming, as the waters bore me onward between forest and forest, the endless branches interlacing over my head, and almost shutting out the sky. Was I called to be a soldier in the war against corrupt civilisation, my pleasure should be to explore in fancy the beautiful regions I could not otherwise attain. I was, and have remained amid a variety of changes, an untamable creature, a denizen of woods and wild places. The deep seclusion of this valley, where now I am writing, the loneliness of the Hermitage, have for me a charm which only those can experience who, living much in the throng of civilised men, yet strange to their ways and feelings, are in dreams transported into the midst of landscapes they have never with waking eyes beheld.

'Our Christmas morning walk did not take us into the mighty woods of Brazil—my favourite hunting-ground in fancy—nor over the rolling savannahs of South America. There were times when snow or frost kept us within all day. Invariably, if we had spent the early hours abroad, we came home to our meal of deliciously-dressed herbs—for I have implied that Mr. Mardol was a vegetarian, and on the same principle was I brought up. When the dishes were cleared away, we would sit round a blazing fire, kept up in all its glory by Mrs. Mardol, to whom the warmth was grateful and almost the only enjoyment in which she displayed what her husband termed an unphilosophical excess. He did not grudge the wood or the coals, however, and, as he sat there, sipping his glass of water, he would tell me stories of his youth and his old companions; how some realised in humble station the meaning and the joy of an earnest human life, and others, the many, had been as thriftless and pleasure-seeking as though born to

high estate. The dispositions of men, he said, did not correspond to the cleavage of ranks. But it was his way to enlarge on the good he had known rather than to dishearten me by dwelling on the bad. Then he would recall his own adventures, which were amusing sometimes and singular; and he seldom left off ere he had drawn, with sharp strokes, in the manner of an engraving rather than a painted scene,—for it had no colour, only an admirable distinctness, — the sketch of some well-known hero that had risen, by labour and genius, to be great among his fellow-workmen and a power in the world's development. The saints of his calendar were such men as Franklin, Pallissy, Stephenson, James Watt, Ampère. But he admired them less when they became rich and famous than in their days of adversity. Of some he said that they had more energy than light; that, in accepting wealth they were false to the brethren; that the founders of the golden aristocracy were too often thieves, as those who had established the aristocracy of blood had been pirates and robbers. He was never long without coming back to his favourite theme, and I was never weary of it.

'I must have been about twelve years old, when, as the short afternoon of Christmas was closing in, and the blazing fire made a mixture of light and shade on our parlour ceiling, a ring came to the side-door, and Mr. Mardol, pausing in the story he was telling,—I remember it was the life and adventures of Victor Jacquemont, the French traveller in the Himalayas,—rose from his chimney-corner and went to open it. We had no servant, not even a girl to run errands. It was my business to do such commissions for Mrs. Mardol, and very willingly I did them. In a few moments the old man came back with some one I had never seen. Mrs. Mardol, however, did not look surprised. Her husband seemed intimate with the man, whose peculiar appearance, to confess the truth, I did not like. He shook hands with Mrs. Mardol, sat down in the chair she offered him, and asked in a quick but courteous tone, whether the candles standing on the table might not be lighted. I disliked him even for this little

thing. I was fond of watching the uncertain dancing shadows on the ceiling and the tongues of fire that leaped among them, before the lights came. He seemed to be intruding on the poetic interval I had enjoyed at Mr. Mardol's knee; to be ending my time of poetry altogether. I cannot tell why this notion came into my head; but, as Mrs. Mardol said to me once, I was always fancying something. And so I fancied this, not guessing what the stranger's business might be. The candles were lighted; my teacher threw himself back in his chair; and the unknown guest, beckoning me to him, drew the lights where they would fall full on my face and leave him in shadow. I looked at Mr. Mardol; he smiled encouragingly, and said, "You need not be afraid, Ivor; our friend will do you no harm." But I was afraid, although, by a strong resolution, I kept down the trembling that came upon me. How well I remember what ensued!

'"My boy," said the stranger, "should you like to be a gentleman?" I stared at him. "A gentleman," I answered when my sense of politeness returned; "I don't know what you mean by a gentleman."

'"Well," said he, "to be rich and wear fine clothes, a new suit every day if you liked, and to drink wine, and eat venison which you had killed yourself, and have servants, and horses, and carriages?" He spoke in an amused voice, and smiled, not unpleasantly I thought, across at Mr. Mardol. He had not long to wait for his answer.

'"I should like a horse," I said, "very much, if I had caught it myself with a lasso, and tamed it." I did not speak of breaking it in, because I was not learned in the terms of chivalry.

'"But," I went on at once, "I have clothes enough, and Mr. Mardol says it is wrong and cruel to be rich. And I don't want to kill anything, or to eat dead animals, or to drink fire-water. And," I concluded, out of breath, though not so incoherently as it sounded, "if all men are equal, how can a good man have servants?"

'To my astonishment, the stranger bent down and kissed me. "You have been well taught, my boy," he cried, laying his hand on my shoulder; if you really think as you

say, there is small fear of your becoming a gentleman. But let me try you. I have left a carriage round the corner; will you come with me and live in a beautiful house, and have all the things I told you about?" His eyes kept looking steadily into mine while he spoke. Do you think (I am addressing the acute lawyer who cross-examined me not long ago) that the prospect dazzled or attracted me? Quite otherwise. Nay, I did not loathe the temptation, I despised it. And I despised him. Why did he come to spoil our Christmas evening? I did not believe in the devil; but, as this man sat looking into my eyes and telling me of unknown riches and a glory that I associated with blood-guiltiness, I felt, for the first time in my life, that the evil power, whose tokens I saw everywhere in misery and hunger, had drawn nigh to me. I would have run to Mr. Mardol and hidden myself in his arms; but the stranger held me, saying, "Why don't you answer? Will you come?" I released myself from his grasp, and sobbed out, "Let me alone, I do not want anything of yours. I wish to be poor. I mean to be poor as long as I live. He caught me round the neck and kissed me once more. "Never mind," he said soothingly, "never mind. Did I not warn you that it was only a trial? It is true I came in a carriage, because I am in weak health and cannot face the piercing weather on foot. And I live in a larger house than Mr. Mardol quite approves. But I am not rich; and I do not want you to be rich."

"Then," I answered immediately, "why do you not speak the truth? It is wrong to make believe that you could give me the things you said, when you hadn't them." He laughed a good deal before replying. "I did not say I had them, but that you might have them, my boy. However, let us leave this. I am going to propose something which I mean in earnest; and I hope you will be a good boy and say yes where I want you to do so?" He raised all manner of wild hopes within me. I looked at him with eager eyes; I felt the tears coming into them; and I could hardly see him for crying, as I said tremulously, "Will you take me to my father and mother?" Such were the words in which my heart relieved its pent-up sorrow. At last the

promise of Christmas Day was to be fulfilled. The home I longed for could not be all a dream. As though it were near at hand, hidden only by a curtain that instant to be drawn away, I divined its presence. Children on every side of me, though in want, though with scantiest raiment, and oftentimes only sleep to still their hunger, had love to keep them warm; while I, poor outcast, was owned by none except for charity. Must not this unexpected friend, if he cared for me as he said, have brought the best of news? Who was so wretched as to lack the love of kith and kin, save only me? Shaken with childish sobbing, I repeated, "Take me to my father and mother!"'

CHAPTER XI

CHASE NOT THE RAINBOW

AGAIN there came a pause in the writing. Thoughts and emotions from the long past strove within Ivor's bosom; and, leaning his head on his hand, he sat for a while in painful meditation. Then, taking up his pen, he went on with the story.

'The man seemed thunderstruck. He started violently, putting his hand to his heart as if he had been shot. "Your father and mother?" he repeated with surprise; "no, I cannot take you to them. When or how did it come into your head that you could have any father and mother except these?" and he pointed to the good old people who sat in anxious silence, waiting—as I have thought in later years when meditating on the doings of that night—to be informed of things about which they had no more knowledge than I. The stranger turned to Mr. Mardol with a somewhat haughty gesture. "You do not instil into the boy," he said, "I am sure you do not, idle fancies of this kind. Is it his way to talk of a possible father and mother?" Mr. Mardol answered calmly, "I have told him that he is no child of mine, and there I have left the matter. Never until this evening did I hear him talk of his unknown parents."—"Right, right," said the stranger; "you rebuke me. I know well that you have dealt with Ivor wisely, and have brought him up according to our agreement." Then, falling to a steady perusal of my tear-stained countenance, he said in firm but gentle accents, "Ivor, you must put away impossible notions. To vex yourself about parents whom you have lost is foolish.

It can bring you nothing but trouble. I am your guardian, although you have never seen me till now; and Mr. and Mrs. Mardol, who have taken such care of you, will give you a home as long as you wish to stay with them. But you are called to a task, in which the ties of kindred would be simply a hindrance. You know in part what I mean. You have now to learn the rest. Can you attend while I am talking?"

'For I stood absorbed in my disappointment, hearing every word, yet feeling that I was thousands of miles away, roaming in the pathless desert, and, with cries that tore the heart, calling on my unknown, on my dead parents, to have pity on me. I was alone, utterly, helplessly alone; cut off from my teacher and kind Mrs. Mardol by the sudden thrusting in of this new-comer, who styled himself my guardian, and who appeared in my childish eyes hard and unlovable. His question ended my reverie; he saw I was attending. Then he explained, rather as to an equal than a mere boy of twelve, that he wished me to interrupt my apprenticeship with Mr. Mardol, and to spend three, if not four, years at a public school. "Not," he continued, "at Eton or Harrow; I could not enable you to enter if I wished, which is not the case. But you shall go to a real public school, nevertheless, where you may learn Greek and Latin, and mix with English gentlemen."

'I was again stirred to rebellion. "What have I to do with gentlemen?" I cried. "I do not want to be a gentleman, but an engraver."

'"Would you not like to learn Latin and Greek?" he inquired. My answer was prompt. "Not if they will make me a gentleman. Mr. Ashwell"—he was an eloquent stone-mason of my acquaintance, great at lecturing and a man I liked to listen to—"Mr. Ashwell says that Latin and Greek train men to be slaves of the aristocracy, and to believe worn-out lies. He says no sensible father would let his children learn them." At which reply I saw a gleam of pleasure on Mr. Mardol's wrinkled features. He was of the same opinion as my stone-mason. But the smile on the stranger's face was due to another feeling. I could see he was a good deal surprised. "You are the

quickest boy I have met of your age," he went on to say; "you appear to have a genius for catching up what is said around you. So much the better. Mr. Ashwell, however, is right and wrong. The classics have become the studies of slaves, but they were written by free men. Do you know nothing of Plutarch's *Lives?*" I had read them all, in English, and I told him so. "Very well," he answered, "then you ought to understand that the classics, too, are held captive by the institutions which tyrannise over mankind. Not only the nations, but their history, their past, their very literature, must be set free and restored to its right owners. Mr. Ashwell speaks like the unwashed barbarian he probably is. We need men of a type less common, who believe in the old learning as in the latest science. You, Ivor, must be acquainted with both. And there are reasons why you should know what the inside of a public school is like. Will you go?"

'"Might I come back afterwards to learn engraving?" I would not give up what I so intensely delighted in. He assured me that such was his intention; when I could go on with my studies by myself, I should return to Mr. Mardol's workroom. If I showed no aptitude for Latin and Greek—but it could not be, I was too fond of modern languages, as he knew, not to feel interested in the ancient, which were so much nobler. The stranger talked more eloquently than even Mr. Ashwell; and my ear detected, in his accent and choice of words, a refinement that in Mr. Ashwell it would have been vain to seek. He must belong, I fancied, to the washed and scented revolutionists, the less common sort, whose ranks he invited me to join. I did not feel reluctant if, in the end, I might become an engraver. At my age it is true, three or four years seemed an eternity. What might not happen in them? But I was told that the time would run by faster than I could imagine; that it was really almost too short; and that I should spend my holidays with Mr. and Mrs. Mardol. *They* acquiesced in the arrangement. And, though I shed tears at the thought of entering on a new world without guide or companion, what could I do but consent? The stranger was affected on leaving me. He said I should see him

again, but not until I had spent a term at school. And so the day was fixed, and he went out into the freezing weather of Christmas, to his carriage, I suppose, round the corner. I was glad to see him go. I spent the long hours of that night in feverish dreaming. All I had heard or imagined during the day came back, strangely confused, in sleep. I seemed to find in the wilderness my long-lost parents; but while I clung about my mother's knees with sobbing affection, or held forth my arms to clasp a father whose face I dimly discerned, the vision melted, and I was standing by an open tomb, wherein lay a dreadful shrouded figure. Bending over it, with sardonic joy in his looks, I beheld the stranger, and, on beholding him, fled. Ever and anon I awoke, crying bitterly, and the pillow wet with my tears. The night seemed as though it would never end. Time after time, with change of scene and attitude, the man that called himself my guardian came before me as the murderer of those I held dear. His icy breath froze the blood in my veins; I shrank at his touch, but could neither escape nor resist him. His single face made my world and filled me with loathing and dismay.

'Why it should thus have affected me I cannot tell even now, when I know him so well. But early impressions are indelible—Mine are, at least. Mr. Felton has never done me harm; I am his debtor for much good. Nevertheless, to dissociate him from the visionary terror of my dreams that night is impossible. I admire his daring and resolution; and there are times when I could almost love him but for the resistance of something within. I shall not love him now—that is certain; the age when affection can be commanded, if ever it can, is past. On my gratitude, respect, and service he may count; I can offer him no more.

'My first days at school! ah me, how miserable they were! Mr. Felton's solicitor, who took me down from London, told me I should be homesick, but I must not mind, it would pass in a week or two. He little understood that the worst home-sickness is that of a child who has no home. If I felt lonely when Mr. and Mrs. Mardol took care of me, it was a thousand times worse here. I had the

sense of a man with the tender heart of a child. My wretchedness was not the simple though piercing misery of a dog that has lost his master; it was poisoned and made incurable by thought. I did not in any way resemble the ordinary English boy, to whom leaving his parents' house is a trial for which, in the society of other boys, he finds compensation. I had left the whole world in quitting Mr. Mardol and his friends. I liked many things of which boys are passionately fond; but I liked, I cherished with enthusiasm, others of which these had not the faintest imagination. In spite of the venerable architecture, large teaching staff, solemn routine, and gentlemanly surroundings that gave the school a name, I felt, when I could take notice of it all, like a civilised man among barbarians. It was a new world, but oh, how inferior to the old! Let me think of it again to-night; let me recall the condemnation I passed on it then, lest for the sake of a beautiful face I fling myself under the dominion of it now.

'An unreal, a fantastic world, wilder than many dreams! Here were five hundred boys, trained, as Mr. Ashwell, the eloquent stone-mason, said, to be slaves of an institution and to believe in worn-out lies. Not that their minds received any training; it was only their characters that were moulded on a certain plan. I saw none with a love of learning; enthusiasm was not scorned, for it did not exist within the school precincts. Masters and boys were immersed in routine; and they had but one standard, of vague outline but exceedingly definite in practice: they all aimed at being English gentlemen. This did not keep the boys from schoolboys' sins. They lied to their masters, and sometimes, though seldom, to one another; they were cruel, selfish, and spiteful; they believed in no religion, and they had little morality. I had been educated hitherto on such a different system that every day increased my astonishment. I cannot have seen things so clearly as I do now, or have been aware of my own reflections. But I did reflect and did pass judgment; a mind quickened by early contact with other minds is not slow in perceiving contrasts so great as that between the people I had left and the people among whom I had come. Strange as I felt to the ways of the

place, a solitary in the crowd of eager, thoughtless boys, I observed incessantly what went on around me.

'I could not help looking for a friend, but it was long ere I found one. What point of contact was there between me and all these boys? They did not read; they could talk only of trivial subjects. They knew nothing of the great causes about which men were contending. They had never been thrown upon the current of life. Their very sins against the moral law had less in them of the human being than of the unreasoning animal which fulfils its desires and has never heard of a law. Mr. Mardol spoke to me of the True, the Good, the Beautiful, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the essential sacredness of duty, the wisdom of obeying the higher Nature which is eternal and unchangeable. Do not say that I could not understand. I did understand; and the proof is that I put questions to which Mr. Mardol could not always find an answer. But that inability, so humbly confessed in the presence of a young child, did not abate the boundless reverence with which I listened. In my thoughts, he was the interpreter of Nature's laws, the Orpheus by whose song my slumbering spirit was awakened. I obeyed him with utter submission, and the deepest feeling of my soul was reverence.

'Here I found as little reverence as enthusiasm; a teacher that should speak of higher things than grammar would have been laughed at; nor do I remember on any one countenance a look to which in my other life I had been accustomed, manifesting the presence of the highest aspirations. It is a look impossible to mistake. Its absence made these men commonplace and the life around them dreary. I could go to none of them for comfort. They did not invite me to do so; they were peremptory and distant in their relations with the boys; and I should as soon have thought of opening my troubles to the stone lions that ramped above the main entrance as to these frigid pedants, whose souls were in the routine of their school and their domestic concerns. They remained no less strange to me when I had lived my four years under them than at the beginning. They were not cruel, but indifferent; not unlearned, but blind to the meaning of their books because

so little acquainted with life; not inhuman, but quite, quite ignorant of the depth and scope of the word humanity. I thought them fitter to be playing cricket or rowing on the river than to teach others how to live. Reserved though I was, the extraordinary questions I sometimes put were a surprise and a puzzle to them. I was told to keep silence; but never did one of them stoop to answer me seriously. A leading article of their creed, I soon found, was that boys have no understanding except for their games, and a few clever ones for the lessons in the school-books. I learned fast, and more than one master complained he did not know what to do with me. Why did my guardian send me to a place where my time was wasted, and I was bidden, under penalties, to spend three months in learning what I knew at the end of three weeks? Of course he had his motives. But I went through suffering which might have been spared me. Did it require all those weary months to give me the true idea of an English gentleman, or to prove by experience that our inheritance from Rome and Athens was shamefully misused? The conviction was soon stamped on my mind, burnt into it, rather, as with encaustic. To make me more of a democrat was impossible; the trial I now went through had a different but no less enduring effect—(yes, Ivor, it must and shall endure)—it was for ever to hinder me from adopting the principles or habits of the class to which my school-fellows belonged. The wealth which they took for granted I renounced with passionate scorn; the intellect they despised I came more and more to believe in; the love of mankind, which they did not even know, I resolved to make the ruling principle of my conduct. What they called honour I saw was partly a brute instinct, partly the far-off reflection of Roman patriotism and Stoic virtue, by no means equal to the original. Did I see that at sixteen? Mr. Felton, who had a peculiar power of making me think, helped me to see it. What can change me?

'The boys were gentlemen in the making. With much that was agreeable, they had nothing that was pathetic about them. I could have liked one or another, as I might have been fond of a high-spirited, beautiful animal;

but how different was that affection from the heart-piercing pity, the unbounded tenderness, I had felt at the sight of my poor little neighbours,—children of my own age or younger, living on stinted fare, without amusements, without green fields or flowers, shivering in the cold, and trembling when the dark night came on because they had only one another's company in the lonesome street,—forlorn, unfriended creatures, the recollection of whom makes my heart bleed even while I write, and tells me that this love-trouble of mine is trifling indeed compared with the anguish that nightly haunts our cities. Be still, be still, spirit of compassion! I will serve, I am serving in the army of the poor. Do not blind me with tears until I have written the memories that are to save me from degradation, from moral ruin.

'No, there was none to share my thoughts. I made so-called friends. I was not insulted, nor was any special injustice dealt out to me. I played and laughed, and was on good terms with most of my companions, and learned to speak as they did, lightly or unfeelingly as the occasion required. I never forgot that I was distinct from them in origin, belief, profession, prospect, disposition,—in everything that may make one human being unlike another. The ingrained conviction that these boys were heirs of injustice helped me; so did their quiet assumption that the world belonged to them; so did the tone in which they implied that to be low-born and base were the same thing; so, above all, did the frequent return to my old teacher and Mrs. Mardol when the holidays came for which I yearned. At the close of a dismal term I saw with fresh and ever-growing delight the familiar workroom, and handled the burin once more.

'The time would not pass quickly. I counted all the days and all their hours, gaining relief only from my books, in which were things high and heroic, if I could have been taught them by men who had felt the heroism or aspired to the height. My evenings, too, when I could be alone, were spent in a pleasant occupation; for I did not lay aside my pencil. But I must have broken down in health and spirits, or pleaded for release from captivity, but for one thing.

Rupert came to be my friend. Rupert, not quite my own age, with his bright looks, ardent feelings, quick impulsive ways,—Rupert, versatile, affectionate, capable of anger and so ready to forgive and forget, sensitive, engaging,—what a change passed over my solitary life when he grew to be a part of it, when his sunshine brought out in the gray wintry landscape all manner of unexpected colouring, warm tints, and comfortable cheering prospects! It was the love of drawing that occasioned our friendship; but I should always have worshipped him, though in silence, for his nature, how different soever from mine, was essentially that of the artist.

'Until I became the confident of his thoughts I had never known what a light, ethereal creation the human spirit may be. I seemed to find in him, young as he was, the ideal charm which is revealed in the Greek statuary, as in the noble unaffected verse which corresponds to it in the Greek tragedians. The friezes of the Parthenon were known to me from the earliest I can remember. My master often took me to see them. He taught me how to admire their unparalleled perfection; for, much as he dreaded the influence of the classic training, he neither ignored nor misunderstood the greatness of antique art. He was a true artist himself, transferring a picture with astonishing insight and accuracy from canvas to steel or wood. The Greek poets I was beginning to read of my own accord, for I would not wait until these indolent guides gave the signal. Thus, in a moment, spring burst upon me out of the heart of winter, the world grew white with blossom, the soft rains fell with music and light in them on the tender meadow grass—truly meadow-sweet, and enamelled in pearly dews to my young vision. Friendship, art, poetry, all the Graces came, and with them hours of pleasant musing, of endless converse, of laughter and passionate delight, and a love I could in no way express, yet was ever expressing. Rupert was my first, my only friend; and how fond he was of me! We quarrelled, not often, but yet we did quarrel; for, if I was patient, I could also be vexed, and he was headlong and impetuous. How vehement were our disputes, how full of anguish our estrangement, how proud we were in

demeanour, and how deeply pierced within! Such quarrels were like thunderstorms—violent, all-threatening. Then a little word, a look, a hand stretched out, broke the spell; not a cloud but rolled away below the horizon, and all the air was sweet and fresh, with the singing of nightingales in every covert, and strange new flowers springing about our steps.

'Only a boy's friendship? Ah, golden hours, full of life and wonder, when, like virgin-snow, the unsullied feelings took on them rosy tints, and sparkled and shone pure and bright under the great sun as it rose into the heavens!

'I had known what it was to pity children,—that serious, thoughtful tenderness, which seems to befit old age, not boyhood,—but never until now had I imagined a love surpassing pity, made up of worship and delight, of joy and absolute surrender, of exquisite satisfaction and new desires. I was beginning my acquaintance with the Old Testament, which at Mr. Mardol's I had not thought of looking into. How often I dwelt upon the one verse that, giving back this fresh experience, as in a looking-glass, was to me a reflection of the eternal truth! "And it came to pass," said the story, "when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." I would think of him often as David, sometimes call him by that name. For he too was ruddy and of a fair countenance. He could do nothing that was not perfect; I loved the least trifle that his hand had touched, finding a pleasure not only in his presence, but in having near me any sign that he would come again. In every friendship, says the proverb, one loves and one suffers himself to be loved. In our friendship I was the lover. I asked only such a return as the god makes to his worshipper, something tender and protecting, and, above all, leave to express my devotion. It is so long ago. Our regard has in nothing diminished, but the charm of its springtide could not last. It has yielded to a more energetic feeling, which seems to me the abiding element of manhood, and a constituent of all our passion when youth is gone. The fresh, wet colour, innocent but warm, has now a deeper tone, a more enduring consistency; it is fixed

and will not fade. The hues of spring are not eternal, but its life is; and summer and harvest do but unfold it to perfection. And yet, and yet,—ah, golden hours, what would I not give for a single one of them, that hour of reconciliation when our nightingales were singing in every brake!

'All too quickly now did the days fleet on, as they swept down the river of time. I counted them for the pleasure they had yet in store. Rupert, like myself, was an orphan; he did not spend the holidays at home, but either in his guardian's family or with friends to whom he was always welcome. With the courtesy of his class, he put no questions as to whence I came. I gave him to understand that I had lost my parents; that my name was not my own; and that I was not going to a university like most of our companions, or, like himself, on the Continent to study. He never said, "What, then, do you propose to do?" But he entreated me to take him for my brother in heart and soul. I promised, and I have kept my promise. The strange thing was that I loved him so well, and felt in such a heavenly new world when he was by, that I did not remember one of the controverted points on which I ought to have examined him. I did not ask him to accept Democracy, or vegetarianism (which latter, from necessity, I had been compelled at school to surrender), or the hatred of city-life, or the worship of Nature. He was gentle to every one; he could not be hard-hearted when he stooped to care for me. But I thought neither of my old associates nor of the questions they were agitating as I looked at his dear face and walked by his side. Long after I came upon the magnificent saying of Novalis, "Were there only two lovers in the universe," and so on. How deep it went into me! I remembered the time when, for Rupert and me, there *were* only two lovers—we two, in all the world, and we wandered as in a happy dream. Life could have no problems for us; we desired nothing save that our dream might never end. Does the secret of regeneration lie there for these half-dead institutions? Is love the last word in the development of the race, as it surely is in that of the individual? But men do not understand. They have so

little inspiration, so universal a sense of distrust. They are cautious, and therefore cold. They pretend to be guided by justice, by an abstract formal balancing of mine and thine, which speedily becomes injustice when the stronger holds the scales. The universal makeweight, I perceive, is the sword of Brennus.

'I went home, but thought day and night of my friend. I worked easily and spoke with less shyness than before; and my secret thoughts were altered. The longing for father and mother, though unappeased, was dormant. I knew it might stir when my last term had ended and I had bidden Rupert farewell. Neither would I mind the great problems in which I had taken such interest. Time enough, I said, when Rupert is away. Mr. Felton observed the change, questioned me, looked over a letter of my friend's which he asked me to show him, and with a grave smile asked me what I knew of the boy's position. I knew very little, except that he was of good birth, that his parents were dead, and that he meant to be a painter. All this I repeated; but, in my own mind, Rupert was the being I loved, who had no antecedents and no place in this lower realm; he came to me out of heaven. What else he might be I neither knew nor cared. Mr. Felton let me alone. He saw how it was, and would not come between me and my first friendship.

'I can see now that the experiment of school had its dangers. However, it succeeded. Much as I loved Rupert, I was not tempted to prefer the English gentleman's view of things either to Plutarch or to Plato. These boys were Macedonians, not Greeks. It might have been difficult to climb from their level to the higher doctrines; but the only change for me would have been a descent, and that in the region of the intellect I hold to be impossible. I am yet convinced that English life is founded on chimæras. Its rank, respectability, wealth, and religion are phantoms, not realities. Mr. Mardol, who had none of these, was superior beyond comparison to the teachers at whose feet I was sitting. For I was astonished, and have since been amused, on finding that Mr. Mardol applied a religious standard, and made me do so too, where these nominal

Christians dreamt only of their conventions. At school I kept my feelings on this and the like matters to myself; even Rupert did not know them. The conformity expected of me was by no means troublesome. Nobody asked whether I thought of eternal realities, or believed in them. I went to chapel like the rest; unlike the rest, I listened to sermons which, in their complacent dulness had a grotesque charm for one to whom the manliest popular speaking in London was accessible and long had been so. I was much too young to analyse, but perfectly capable of feeling the difference. I heard the preacher in the pulpit tamely rehearse, for the hundredth time, a gospel which was not so real to him as to me were the figures of the heathen mythology in his everyday lessons. I knew the poetical worth and grandeur of Apollo; he did not know the historical worth or grandeur of his Christ. Therefore, he droned out a burden of so-called saving articles and went his way, satisfied to have spoken what he had spoken before, any time these twenty years. Of religion he knew nothing. On the other hand, my friend Mr. Ashwell, the eloquent stone-mason, rugged as he was in speech and bearing, insisted on a creed for which he would have laid down his life, or taken that of any preacher—a creed which absorbed his being and filled his daily thoughts, shining out to him as the certain salvation of mankind. Now, Mr. Ashwell did not stand alone. I knew a multitude of others, equally convinced and eager to spread their teaching, though not so eloquent. The old religion, as seen at school, seemed to me an effete babbler on Sundays, and no better than a forgotten corpse the rest of the week.'

'But, Ivor, you reason more than enough. Go on with your story. You left school as you came, a revolutionist; you corresponded with Rupert; you saw Mr. Felton once in a way and satisfied him that you were striving to unite the noble past of mankind with as noble a future; you earned your bread honestly, and repaid Mr. and Mrs. Mardol's affection by tending them in their old days and closing their eyes when the hour struck. You laboured in the cause, and did not abandon it in the pursuit of worldly

phantoms; you fell in love neither with rank, nor with riches, nor with respectability. You were loyal and true until a certain morning, when, as you gazed foolishly into a beautiful face, your beliefs and principles melted like frostwork in the sun; and you fell in love with Lady May Davenant.'

'Ah, spare me, stern monitor! I will confess and have done with it. Yes, it is too true. Convinced that I had nothing to fear from love, that Rupert's friendship left no room for it, I came into the neighbourhood of fire and was scorched before I knew. Pity and pardon my inexperience. How could I anticipate that feelings which had never shown a sign of existence would leap out of the soil, full-armed and mature, at the glance of a woman which meant nothing for me and yet was infinitely captivating? But is it not shameful that I waited to catch the plague until I had left my work-a-day world and was admitted within this high-born circle? Could I never, then, have fallen in love with a mechanic's daughter? I never did, nor thought of such a thing. It is only, I suppose, King Cophetua that weds the beggar maid, not a man whose rank is about equal to her father's. I have seen beautiful, though ragged, damsels in the haunts of the poor; could I have asked one of them to share my affection? Not I. Cophetua had a greater mind than the engraver's apprentice. Or was it that I sought a companion who would understand me and be my radiant polar star in what I dreamt of achieving? That may be the explanation. May Davenant has, I think, the heart of a woman and the mind of a man. I like her resolute bearing, the proud carriage of her body and straightforward look, the cordial grasp of her hand. Then how abashed she can suddenly seem, eyes cast down and the colour mounting, as if in the midst of her imperious strength she remembered that she was a maiden and therefore needed a stronger arm. I beheld in her a highly-cultivated yet unspoilt nature, the finest breeding combined with as fine a play of impulse and passion,—no wonder I began to think there might be happiness in love. Let it serve for my exculpation. No, she would not dream of marrying beneath her, as the world calls it. For me she cares not at all.

When I talk she looks at me with undaunted eyes; it is only while she is talking herself, or Lord Trelingham interposes, or Rupert throws in a hasty word, that the fit of blushing comes upon her. To indulge an affection like this would be chasing the rainbow. It may be difficult to renounce; but, Ivor, confess that it is impossible to attain. Some other man will appear to make her happy, if he has not come already. Her gratitude for the restoration of the canvas may give you a place in her memory among carpenters and drawing-masters. You will bid the Hermitage farewell, go back to the mighty prison of London, live where no great lady comes or would venture her dainty footstep, and find in Rupert all the joy that affection is to bestow on you. Good-bye, Lady May; the rainbow has melted into mist.'

He flung down his pen, and once more, walking to the window, drew the curtains. As he did so a flood of light came into the room. He had been writing many hours; he was cold and stiff; and the morning, with its steely clearness wherein there seemed neither the warmth of sunshine nor the solemn brilliancy of the stars, chilled him yet more. He turned to the hearth where, when he began to write, the fire was blazing. A heap of white ashes lay in the fender, and not a spark glowed among them. 'The fire is out,' he said to himself with a mocking smile, 'and so is my love for May Davenant. Each has done its work. What more do I want?' And his thoughts went back to the solemn words whispered as he stood face to face with the stars at midnight. 'What is love but a handful of dry heather, set on fire and cast into the waters of death.' He would not live for it; he must aim at the larger good of immortality which, transcending passion, in some unknown way realises perfection.

CHAPTER XII

SPECIOSA MIRACULA

IVOR MARDOL has made such frank confession in the foregoing pages that I need not recount the history of those bewitching days when he proved himself less a contemplative than a common mortal. He had dreamt dreams and suffered moments of misery. Sometimes he had lingered an hour after breakfast about Rupert's easel and unwittingly performed the office of duenna, which the Countess had openly renounced, saying she was tired of sitting so long at the same window. Nor had he spent as many hours as were anticipated in his island-dwelling. There, as he bent over the canvas, he had been glad and sorry that it did not vex him with a lovely face; so distracted he could never have made it whole. But he had envied Rupert. And now? His eyes were purged of glamour, he saw that Lady May's indifference to him had been complete all along. She, a heroine of the old order, could not recognise a hero in this saint of the new. On hearing Glanville's description she had called Ivor romantic. She hardly thought him so after a month's acquaintance. His clear intellect, astounding erudition, frankness, and simplicity, made him as interesting as he was amiable. But to her the finest thing about him was his worship of Rupert. For she had not come to the stage of burning jealousy where even the friendship of a third person is resented. But things were going fast that way. The passion that consumed her was growing to a deadly white flame; and all beings, save herself and the artist, were becoming shadows and nonentities to her. How could she bestow a thought on Ivor?

He knew it now, and was resigned. His countenance did not betray him; and his Diary was a good, if a stern, friend in those long hours at the Hermitage. He found that he must not quit Trelingham. The Earl begged him to stay, and Rupert insisted. To their entreaties Tom Davenant joined his own. For, as if to demonstrate that not love but friendship must form his happiness, Ivor and the young heir of Trelingham had become the closest of companions. Tom, who was now himself again, had intended to return to Foxholme, but the Earl would not let him go. He persuaded him, in fact, to make the Court his home during the autumn and winter. There were deeds to be examined, accounts rendered, and other legal business transacted before his coming of age; and it would be pleasant to do these things at Trelingham rather than in London, which was a place Tom abhorred. He could never stay there above three days without losing his spirits; being most unlike his fashionable mother, who declared life in the country impossible. So the young man remained, and gave his time first to fishing and by and by to hunting, for he was fond of both. This, I fancy, is rare in the civilised sportsman; and, indeed, as they are habits derived from quite distinct sets of savage ancestors, they are not likely to be united in the same individual.

Now, Ivor was a follower of Isaac Walton's, and Tom Davenant, rowing one afternoon in August to the Hermitage for some fishing tackle he had left there, had found the philosopher equipped as for an expedition, and delightedly offered to show him the resources of the Yale. Ivor was already acquainted with them, but he submitted to be led up stream and down, while his guide pointed out the deep pools and shady nooks under sun-baked stones where the trout were lurking. They spent a delicious afternoon. The stream was whipped, the basket filled, and Ivor's knowledge of the ways of that pretty river excited Tom's highest admiration. Thus did the wild huntsman and the London engraver make friends. They did not say much about their feelings. But when Ivor was not in the house, Tom was pretty sure to be away; and many an hour they passed by lakelet and stream, during which their conversation

ranged wider than might have been fancied. Ivor had not begun as a fisherman, he told Tom, but as an explorer. The sight of running water fascinated him, and he had spent his holidays in following the course of our English streams, going down with them through the varying landscape till they were lost in the sea. It was from lingering on the banks in all sorts of weather and studying the river life that he had come to understand the pleasure there was in angling. 'Cast a line into the waters,' he said,—and Tom listened as to inarticulate music,—'transform yourself for the while into pike or salmon, and forget your too busy reasoning, you will find after a few hours that all manner of dim faculties within are bestirring themselves, unsuspected kinships with the lower creation coming to light; you dream, and the spirit of the place floats silently near; it speaks in the only language that can be uttered in these depths, vague, elemental, soothing, and you recover a little of the freshness that made childhood a wonder and a romance.' Thus Ivor explained the final cause of fly-fishing; not to catch trout for supper, but to get back the lost sense of Paradise and be one again with the spirit of the watery realms from which, some forgotten morning millions of years ago, the first amphibian crept daringly on land. He said, now and then, to his scientific friends that while he agreed with them in going forward, he thought it would be fatal to man's happiness if he did not go backward too. In his metaphorical way he added, 'Though harvest means the golden grain which is waving in the sun, you will not get a second unless you bury the seed in the earth out of which it sprang. Go back to the amphibian if you would go on to the angel.' His friends looked gravely at him and did not smile. They thought it more respectable to say as little as might be of the amphibian now he had become such a distant relative. But these were chamber-philosophers, not students in the open air. They little understood what a revolution is preparing for their science, as well as for the political systems against which they are contending. 'Man will rule over Nature,' said Ivor, 'only when he is at home in every part of it and knows it from within.'

Thus Ivor gained a second friend, to whom, after Rupert, he cleaved with his whole heart. They had in common a deep sense of enjoyment and freedom in the open air, and the unconscious poetry that lingers about the sedges by the river. Perhaps there was something else that bound them—an innocent mind, a pure and simple heart; for they were both unworldly. Tom could understand where he could not speak, and he grew greatly attached to the stranger. He consulted him on other things besides fishing: what he ought to do at Foxholme, whether he could look after his tenants without doing more harm than good, and kindred subjects on which he would never have spoken to Lord Trelingham. Would Ivor come and stay with him after he was twenty-one? Ivor smiled, but made no promises. He was not his own master, he said.

Their intimacy delighted Glanville, surprised but did not displease the Earl, and slightly amused Lady May. In the bosom of the Countess it excited some innocent wonder. She neither liked nor disliked Mr. Mardol; to her he was a species of inferior artist, who came about the place as other men did to put up stained-glass or æsthetic woodwork. She wished he would not persuade Tom to go fishing so often, or spend the time after dinner out of doors. It was stupid when Tom came in merely to dine, and to stroll about afterwards with a male companion instead of staying to be worshipped in the drawing-room. For herself, she had made several flying visits to town, and meant, after Tom's birthday, to spend a season in Paris. But she could not forego the opportunities of seeing him which Trelingham afforded. It was her second home, and she would stay until the young man went. Thus eagles, wrens, and turtle-doves reason, after their kind.

Glanville, meanwhile, was falling into a mesmeric sleep. He had no defence against the sorceries of Lady May, no other love to resist an ardent nature bent on making him its own. He felt the pressure of an invisible hand, silently but surely compelling him to his knees. He could not pretend indifference to Lady May. The strange fierce beauty of her character excited him. Her conversation was singularly animated; her voice had charmed

him from the first; and the loneliness of her position appeared to him deserving of the sincerest pity. She spoke of the great relatives with whom she had passed her time during her mother's frequent illnesses. Among them all she had not one friend. Little by little she told Rupert all she dared. He saw more clearly than she did the peril of these confidential dialogues. But it was hard not to return her confidence and treat her as an intimate friend who would be delighted to know all about him. When the conversation was over he regretted that it had begun; he accused himself of sentimentality, of being led away by his feelings, and indulging in what the French call effusion. Nevertheless, a morning seldom ended before Lady May had taken up the thread of sentiment again, while appearing to be merely absorbed or unhappy, and Glanville had suffered another of the silken meshes to be woven about him. Now he was under the enchanter's spell; he fancied he could move when he desired, that he had only to will; and he was forgetting that to will under certain circumstances is the whole, but an insuperable, difficulty. A single word would break the spell; but how was he to utter it? On the contrary, he began whispering to himself that such confidences were very pleasant; that he knew where to stop; that there was no reason why he should not be Lady May's best friend; that he had not thought she could be so fascinating; that if he did care a great deal for her it would do no harm; that—— he woke up one morning with something like a guilty conscience and began to deliberate whether he could stay at the Court and not ask Lord Trelingham to consent to their marriage. Was he so sure, then, of the lady's consent? He was no coxcomb; and yet he was sure. By a thousand tokens May Davenant had convinced him that he was the most interesting man she had met. To confess it in direct terms was neither possible, nor becoming, nor necessary. He knew it. Even now he did not say to himself that she was in love with him; but he felt no anxiety. The question he had asked in his own mind, as he walked up and down the front terrace on a certain afternoon, seemed now to have an answer. Could

he live without one who captivated his feelings, who would be happy to share his life, who was capable of splendid enthusiasm? Her position might demand an alliance with rank; but her extraordinary gifts made her worthy to be the helpmate of genius.

Glanville did not speak much that morning; but he looked often at Lady May, and the glance of soft inquiring meditation, which had never before lighted on her, stirred her heart with an expectant thrill. She could not meet his eyes, but a gentle blush, a sense of overwhelming diffidence, which gave to her motions a distracted and yet not ungraceful hesitation, betokened that love, waiting so long for a response, was now certain that it would not be withheld. The morning was still and autumnal; but in Lady May's heart rose the delicious feeling of spring. She was no longer miserable; the clouds were dispersing, and the sun was coming out. She felt that love was answering love; and while her own was intensified, it was humbled too. Had she done that which was unmaidenly? had there been a lack of reticence, a boldness in speaking of what she had thought and suffered? She hoped not; she trusted not. But all would be well now. These first green buds were like the promise of a glorious summer; they gave her inexpressible delight. Nor was Glanville quite destitute of similar feelings. He knew that she was pleased and happy; confidence between them seemed natural enough now, and he was sure it would last. He did not think Lord Trelingham could resist an only daughter's wishes. His own success had been too brilliant and unmistakable to allow of the difficulties being raised which are commonly brought forward in such cases. He would finish the Madonna of the Seraphim before taking any step. There must be no chance of an abrupt termination to the task he had begun. But, on the day after he had restored the picture, he would demand the hand of Lady May. That, and that alone, should be his recompense. Nor would he give occasion to malice by attempting to gain the lady's consent before her father's. It should not be said of him that he had taken the Earl at a disadvantage. Had his affection been as strong as he imagined perhaps

he had not behaved so punctiliously; he might have found himself saying more than he intended, and betraying a secret that lovers cannot easily keep. Anyhow, he resolved to wait.

The last sitting was over. Glanville, thinking himself much enamoured of the lady, paid her no compliments; but, with the delicate flattery of the artist, spoke of the expression, temper, and make of soul which went with this or that detail in the copy he was taking from nature. He felt satisfied that the task was done, and, as he thought, not unworthily. There remained the more difficult enterprise, to transfer the features of Lady May to the original canvas, now set up at the end of the gallery and waiting the master's touch. Curtains drawn round it concealed from profane eyes the havoc that remained, though Ivor had smoothed away crease and hollow, making, by the aid of some secret in alchemy, a restoration so perfect that the Earl wondered and Glanville was astounded. The engraver would not allow any one else to view his triumph. He insisted, mildly, but with the authority of a benefactor, on hiding the Madonna of the Seraphim in a kind of artist's sanctuary until it shone out in splendour as before the morning it was ruined. Glanville agreed, and, as he could not execute what amounted to a *tour de force* in the light-handed way he had taken with Lady May's portrait, it was resolved that the gallery should remain open, but the farther end be cut off and fitted up as a studio, where Rupert, assisted by his friend, might work unhindered.

With a mixture of pain and expectation, Lady May rose for the last time from the chair in which she had sat and dreamt over her life during all those mornings. She put away the heavy crimson dress, sighing as she did so, and wondering whether the Madonna of the Seraphim would become to her an intolerable memory or, as Dante sings, 'the beginning and the cause of all joy.' The tremendous inward conflict, the intense longing and ardour of resolution had left her exhausted, like a medium who has with difficulty succeeded in mesmerising a reluctant will. And was she successful? She did not know. Rupert's countenance

told her so little. She saw him vanish with her portrait behind the voluminous curtains of his improvised studio; and she walked slowly away, feeling like one that has witnessed the fourth act of a tragedy and is uncertain how the fifth will turn out. Alas that the tragedy was her own! She was expectant, not sanguine. It was part of 'love's fine wit,' that she anticipated on the day when the picture was restored the *dénouement* of these most wretched uncertainties. She must live through the interval as she could. It was not easy. Passion is one of the sleepless gods; it watched by her day and night, banished repose from her pillow, took the colour from her cheek, steeped her very music in bitterness, languor, and excitement, in delirious joy and quickly succeeding pain. She had been, in earlier times, a bold horsewoman, somewhat to the scandal of Lord Trelingham's acquaintance, but it was an exercise she had foresworn and she would not return to it. Had the chalet been untenanted she might have spent her worst hours there, unobserved by the guests who were constantly coming and going at the Court. But now she felt like a wounded animal that has no place to creep into. She knew not what to anticipate nor how she should act. There was, in the whole world, no single creature with whom she could take counsel; and the gnawing pain at her heart grew, until she feared in a sudden frenzy of the nerves to betray her secret and be disgraced for ever. Day after day she wandered about the beach, choosing the most lonely situations and walking on and on wherever the strip of sand was wide enough to leave a passage at the foot of the cliffs. She was not much the better for it all; her sleep after such prolonged exertion was broken and feverish. She seemed to be living on wild hopes which would not bear examination. Now and then a passing look, a word from Glanville revived her. But that was little enough, and there was nothing else.

At length the decisive morning came, towards the end of October, when the still air seems tranquil, not melancholy, and there are frequent gleams of sunshine. Glanville had been absorbed in his work, not allowing himself a moment's leisure while daylight lasted. He could

think of nothing else. All the airy shapes that filled his imagination had taken wings; he forgot even the motive with which an artist is commonly credited—the love of fame. One purpose took possession of him—to make this picture as perfect as he might; to enter into the heart of that dead Friar who had painted it and wrest from him the secret of its loveliness. He felt that to restore was, in this instance, to create anew. Rupert had learnt when he was very young, what many artists have not discovered when they lay down their pencil,—at twenty he said to himself that the painter who has not lived in his picture will never make it live to others; that drawing and colouring are the hands, but imagination is the eye and the soul. In delineating the countenance of May Davenant he had seen only the lady before him; in reproducing it he forgot her, and in spirit went back to the world of religious types and ecstatic imaginations wherein Fray Raimondo had beheld the Virgin of the Seraphim ere he depicted her to others. The enthusiasm which dominated Glanville was not love; it was antagonistic to love; but he might have made to Lady May the excuse which Andrea del Sarto offered to his angry wife—that he forgot her for herself. There was no room then for a double worship; he was living, contemplating, loving with Fray Raimondo, two centuries ago, in a southern land and among a medieval populace.

There are dramatic painters no less than dramatic poets, men who throw themselves into a mood, a character, a whole epoch, with such intense realisation that the feelings spring up in them which correspond with the scene they are describing, and out of that vivid illusion they extract truth and summon the past from its grave. When the short afternoon compelled him regretfully to put down his brushes, he still went on dreaming of San Lucar and the monk in his cell, with the golden vision steadfast above him. This man of the world became a child, a mortified recluse, a seer at the gate of heaven; for the time being he was neither sarcastic nor melancholy. He would not have chosen the subject; he painted no Madonnas of his own accord; but since it was given to him, the instinct which made him an artist impelled him to

obey the law of inspiration whereby he had succeeded hitherto.

None but Ivor Mardol saw the work advance. The friends were much together and communicative as usual on the points raised in its execution. But on other things they were silent. Each had a secret of his own which concerned Lady May, and neither could utter it. Glanville, indeed, looked forward to the marriage on which he had, I will not say set his hopes, but made up his mind. Yet he was no more excited when he thought of it than if some one had told him that there would be rain in the evening. Had he cared half as much as the lady who was waiting breathlessly for the fifth act to commence, he would have found his tongue, and surprised Ivor with his eloquence. Then, too, he might have seen into the bosom of his friend, whose thwarted affection, purifying itself like an ascending flame, was not to be quenched, but transformed into the rarest sentiment of chivalry. Ivor was more tender than passionate; the pity which was almost born with him coloured his every feeling, even that friendship for Rupert, wherein pity might have seemed to find no place. Much more did it warm and melt his being when the haggard looks of Lady May told him, the most observant and most unobtrusive of spectators, that she was suffering. It was a feeling which softened his disappointment and took away the eagerness that, under other circumstances, would have prompted him to pour his confidences into the ear of Rupert. A necessary reserve grew up between them, not weakening their affection, but marking another stage in the friendship which had united them. It was destined to exert a momentous influence on their lives when the threads had grown more entangled.

So the morning arrived, bright and clear, on which Glanville proposed to unveil the Madonna of the Seraphim. There were no strangers in the house except himself and Ivor, both of whom had by this time a false air, as the French say, of belonging to the domain. Even Mr. Truscombe had not been invited. Lord Trelingham, in his rare visits to the gallery, chiefly during the earlier sittings, had made various suggestions with regard to the

tone and expression of the vanished countenance. His memory for technical details and accessories was excellent, and, thanks to it, Glanville had reproduced the style, if not the actual peculiarities, of ornament and setting. The Earl would not interrupt him while engaged on the picture itself; but he came when Glanville was not working, marked the changes that he judged indispensable, and offered his advice with the respect due to a great artist. It was generally to the purpose; nor did Rupert pique himself on knowing the original better than those who had seen it. When the last colour was laid on, Lord Trelingham took what he called a private view and came away delighted. The painting was hung in its former place, the purple veil, which still had Lady Elizabeth's name upon it, was drawn in front; and on the pleasant forenoon of the day appointed the little family group stood before it in expectation.

Rupert was still in the enthusiastic mood of Fray Raimondo; only by an effort could he remember that he had promised himself a reward which to-morrow he must demand or renounce for ever. Lady May superstitiously expected to read her fate in the unveiled picture; and Tom and the Countess, who were standing side by side, the least concerned of all, felt vaguely that an atmosphere of unrest surrounded them. Karina had not discovered Lady May's secret; she fancied more than she knew; while of Glanville she could make nothing whatever. His mind was a sealed volume which required a mightier spell than hers to unlock it. She whispered to her cousin that there ought to be an overture before the curtain drew up; but Lady May did not answer. The Earl looked graver than usual, for he was thinking of that other morning, when the young Alice and Edgar Valence exchanged, in the presence of this same Madonna, the pledges that had bereft him of a friend and a sister. His eyes turned more than once towards Lady May, inquiringly, anxiously, as if he were struck with her resemblance to her unhappy aunt.

There was no overture, nor was any needed. When Ivor drew aside the veil a sight as beautiful as ever graced the eyes of mortals broke upon them. The picture, as they remembered it after the storm, was blurred in a hundred

places, and the countenance of the Virgin had disappeared under dust and defilement. But now! It was a new creation. The seal of age could not remain intact; fresh colours, though exquisitely blent with the old, took something of its two centuries from the painting. But there was no crudeness, no offensive novelty; a light and delicate touch had given radiance to what was dim and effect to what was faded. The splendour of the vision came back, the heavenly dyes of angelic raiment, the brightness of the martyrs' crimson, the golden emerald of the far-off gleaming gates. Most wonderful of all, the countenance that had been lost was visible once more, drawing all eyes to it, in calm unconscious beauty, not looking down towards earth, but already enlightened, as it should seem, with the glory that falls from the Great White Throne. It was not a likeness of any human face; if it resembled Lady May, the expression transcended all that had ever shone upon her features. Instead of the proud, self-centred look, there was unspeakable innocence, humility, gladness, a pure light on the brow, a tenderness in the gentle eyes, a majesty blent with meekness in the pose of the head, which bore its diadem of glittering stones as if they had been flowers. The sense of eternal triumph might be discerned in the movement of that glorious procession, as it swept through the air and mounted towards the stars of God. Quitting the world of clouds it had attained the region of transparent light; nor was there a reminiscence of pain or grief on any countenance. The martyrs seemed springing to a new and divine life out of the wine-dark tide into which they had been plunged; the cherubim, with the rose of everlasting youth upon their wings, soared upward like lambent fire.

Not a word was spoken for some minutes. In the highest human achievement there is ever something which appears to be more than human, and before which praise and criticism are alike trivial. What struck Lady May with astonishment was that she could not recognise herself. That serene countenance was not her own. She had never cherished the meek thoughts that looked out of those eyes, nor loved humility and patience, nor resigned herself to

sorrow, like that maiden who was ascending into a realm of peace she should never know. Whence had come the artist's inspiration? If her dissatisfied spirit had passed into him, if the influence she strove to exert had made a conquest of his being, he might have painted as splendid a Madonna, but it would not have been such as this. 'No,' she said, 'he could have painted no Madonna. I am only fit to be the type of a different woman—a sinful, ambitious, despairing creature, for whom heaven and its glory are a legend.' She read in the beautiful painting a condemnation of her hopes. If Glanville's imagining was of this lofty kind, he would never stoop to her. Was he, then, a religious fanatic, or where had he seen the innocent loveliness here depicted so truthfully? Morning after morning he had fixed his eyes on her, as she sat before him, only at last to create a vision in which she could claim no part. Rupert's genius was her rival; he could always evoke phantoms whose surpassing beauty would make her's seem poor and common. It was a bitter disappointment. She could not speak; her very heart grew chill and heavy, and her lips turned pale.

Lord Trelingham came to her relief. He enlarged on the likeness and unlikeness between old and new; what had been of necessity put in, what, on the other hand, it was impossible to restore. He praised Glanville for having produced exactly the effect which must have been intended by Fray Raimondo. Neither did he forget Ivor's share in the restoration. He turned the picture this way and that to show how smooth was the surface; he made the Countess view through a glass the extraordinary way in which the colours stood out from it and were at once solid and transparent. The delicately-painted foreground, the middle distance, the perspective, were all discriminated and discussed; while Lady May endeavoured to recover her voice, and Tom Davenant listened respectfully without comprehending half a sentence. Karina knew more of painting than might have been expected; she had travelled along the famous picture-galleries, and had painted a little herself. She, therefore, kept Lady May in countenance, and atoned for her shortcomings as duenna by saying now all that was required

in commendation of Glanville, and encouraging Lord Trelingham to prolong his discourse. Rupert was not a man to gape after flattery. He knew that the Earl's praise was sincere; the Countess did not talk nonsense, though her remarks were acute rather than profound; and Lady May's continued silence gave token that she was too much affected by his triumph to speak. When at last she murmured a word or two, though he could not catch what she said, he answered smilingly. His own enthusiasm was not yet exhausted. He left them commenting on the picture, and went out for a solitary walk in the Chase.

He did not return to luncheon. The dinner-hour came and he was still absent. What could have detained him? Ten o'clock struck, and eleven; it was close upon midnight and he had not come. Lady May, restless and impatient, asked herself whether the suspense would never end, the *dénouement* never arrive. What was Rupert doing? or had anything befallen him?

CHAPTER XIII

SWEETEST EYES WERE EVER SEEN

WHEN Rupert left the picture-gallery he descended behind Trelingham Court into the Park, and, after walking some distance, struck into a little-frequented pathway, bordered with evergreens, which led in the opposite direction to the moor and came down finally to the river Yale. Sunshine, still lingering about and penetrating through the branches, made a chequered pattern before him as he walked; the foliage stirred under a light inconstant breeze, the sound of the sea broke upon his ear when he paused; and he felt that he might now, without offending conscience, take a holiday. He had been working hard with brain and pencil for several weeks. He had thought and dreamt of nothing but the picture. It was at length finished. He could stretch out his arms like a man who has had the fetters taken off them. He was free, and the great work would do him honour. Mind and brain were now at rest; he might wander as he pleased and forget yesterday to make himself the readier for to-morrow. A chapter of his life was closed.

That sense of finality, of complete severance from the past, which comes on the conclusion of an undertaking in which we have long been interested predominated over all others. He saw the curtain fall on the dramatic morning-piece which might have been styled *A Lady's Portrait*. All that he had done, all that was associated with the Madonna of San Lucar, receded to a distance; it became as fixed and cloudlike as the ridge of mountains we may see every day from our window but never think of

travelling towards. And the figure of Lady May receded, floated on, and became a reminiscence affecting him no more than the painted Madonna herself. Had he been in love? He smiled. Was there love in a fancy which could not endure a change of conditions, which fled with the crowd of momentary shadows that swept by him and left no trace? What he felt now was a sunny satisfaction, restoring him to his former sense of freedom. The mesmeric trance into which he had fallen was at an end. He could go whither he chose, and take with him neither regret nor longing. Rupert felt that he had ceased to be his own master for a little interval; but the servitude could not last. He was delighted to be free; and with a light step he strolled on till he came to the river.

At the place where he paused the Yale was moving over sand and jutting stones, which broke the tiny stream into a hundred glittering rivulets, and gave a sure footing if one were tempted to cross. The other side, thickly covered with tall trees, looked pleasant in the sunshine and not hard to climb. It seemed to lead upwards to open country, to a view over the moor which Glanville had not enjoyed. He stood a moment considering, then sprang lightly from stone to stone, and began to ascend the steep. It proved more difficult than he had fancied; the ground was broken, the brushwood grew at the most irregular intervals and made his advance fatiguing. But there was a zigzag path, wide enough for one, which led along the side of the valley and might take him to the top. His thoughts were agreeable; the morning had many hours in it yet, and why should he not ramble on? He went forward, plucking a leaf here and there, or breaking off a withered branch; stopped sometimes to get a glimpse of the river where it was flowing beneath him, and fell into a poetic reverie which brushed with passing wing a thousand associations, old and new, but was not awake enough to dwell upon any of them.

He had been advancing for nearly an hour, and still the track did not turn, but ran irregularly on, as if meaning to come out at the end of the ridge. On his right, which was the way he wanted to go, the steep grew higher and more

rugged; the trees huddled close together, and walking became no easy task. Should he retrace his steps?

He went a few paces forward. There was a flicker of sunshine among the leaves and a bit of blue sky showing itself ahead; perhaps there might be an opening where he saw it. The wood seemed to grow thicker than ever, but he scrambled through, and found himself in a narrow, tortuous bridle-path which descended from the high country, and, skirting the impenetrable side of the thicket, wound away in the direction towards which Glanville had set his face. He remembered the map of the region, and judged that it must be making for Toxenden. He had no wish to get so far. Looking again, he saw that a grassy opening stretched down towards the river, and he determined on exploring that way. He disliked going back on his own footsteps, but did not mind an hour's extra walking in search of adventures—pedestrian adventures, ending in muddy boots, which was all he could hope for in civilised England. He went over the grass and found that the opening continued. It was not long before he saw the gleaming of water to his left; but, instead of a sparkling thread, it seemed a broad sheet. He broke through the covert, and in surprise looked down upon 'the shining levels of the lake.' In front rose the smiling Hermitage. He had come to it by a pathway which was hardly used, and which had never before been traversed by him.

Although the sun was not so warm nor the sky so bright as when for the first time he beheld the chalet, it was an exquisite morning, and he stood awhile to contemplate the picture. Doors and windows were open as then, inviting him to enter. He did not suppose Ivor would be there; for he never lunched at the Hermitage when he had gone up early to Trelingham Court. But Rupert said to himself that he might as well take possession of the Pompeian kitchen and improvise a classic, though a lonely meal, before ending his expedition. He should find a skiff in the boat-house. He opened the door and looked round, expecting to see what he wanted; but, if a rowing-boat had ever been there, it was gone. He found instead—and it made him laugh when he saw it—one of those odd-looking

contrivances which represent the first untutored efforts of man at shipbuilding, which are less advanced even than a canoe. They are round, tub-like things, made of wood and leather, roughly put together, and I fancy are called coracles. The instrument by which they are put in motion is a short-handled spoon, of a good breadth at the extremity; and they move along with great speed when a savage or a knowing University man takes the command. 'Well,' said Glanville, 'here is proof positive that the prehistoric has been in the land, or, to speak more accurately, on the water. I must really try my hand at this.' He sat himself down in the coracle, and with that mixture of courage and wariness that we may observe in genuine athletes, so manipulated the large flat spoon that he was neither upset nor sent whirling round in a hopeless circle. As he sped along, much engrossed in the government of his coracle, he looked forward, and, not without surprise, perceived that the proper civilised boat was lying at the bottom of the steps which led up to the Hermitage. 'Then Ivor is at home, after all,' he said to himself; 'but why did he come round to this side? Has he been exploring in the wood like me? And if he has, why did I not hear or see him?'

He fastened the coracle, sprang out, and ran up the steps, calling out as he entered, 'Ivor, Ivor!' There was no response. Thinking he might be in the kitchen, Rupert went thither; but no Ivor was there. What could have become of him? He turned back and noticed that the door of the study by which he had passed was half-open. His friend might be engaged over some drawing and too busy to answer. Throwing the door wide, he would have called out again as he entered, but that a sight most unexpected made him pause, draw back, and become fixed, motionless as a statue, on the threshold. A young lady in a riding habit, a lady he had never set eyes on, an angel that must have dropped from the third heaven, stood with a book in her hand quietly confronting him. Not a word did she utter, and confusion held him dumb. Politeness deserting him in his utmost need, he gazed for half a minute—or was it for half an eternity?—into the calm,

lustrous eyes that met his own. They seemed of a most limpid innocence—beautiful, shining, starlike. Did the lady look as steadily at him? I am sure he did not know. All he saw were the beautiful eyes, not any of the meaning they may have had in them. He waited spell-bound.

The lady did not blush, or seem greatly taken aback. She smiled the least bit in the world—innocently, yet not harmlessly. And then, in a low clear voice, still keeping her book in her hand, still fascinating the thrice-bewildered Rupert with her childlike eyes, she said, 'Are you the tenant of the chalet? And must I ask your pardon?'

'The tenant? No; really I—my friend Mr. Mardol—I was expecting to find him; is there any——'

Rupert stopped. He did not know how to go on; his eyes made his tongue falter. I think the young lady knew, suspected, was at least half-conscious that he could not continue while she kept looking at him. She turned slightly away, and took up his broken discourse.

'Then,' she said, 'you do not live here. I was afraid'—she did not look in any way afraid, and I cannot believe she was, although she said so—'I was afraid it might be like the fairy tale, and that one of the bears was coming home.'

'The bears—the fairy tale? I do not understand you.' He was bewildered yet. She laughed now, and looked prettier than before. 'If you are a stranger,' she said, 'and not master of the chalet, you will allow me to take my leave before any one comes. You appear not to know a great deal about fairy tales,' she went on, as if enjoying his perplexity; 'but I have no time to explain. I ought to go before the bears catch me. There is no saying whether they would take me for their sister. Some of them ought,' she added pensively.

'If you mean,' answered Rupert, who began to remember the children's story to which she alluded, 'that you do not wish to meet any of Lord Trelingham's family, I think I can assure you that they are not likely to visit the Hermitage at this hour. It is my friend, Mr. Ivor Mardol, who lives here just now.'

Her gloves were lying on a chair. She put down the volume in her hand, took up the gloves, and began slowly to put them on. After some deliberation, she said:

'And is your friend a relative of Lord Trelingham's?'

'Not at all,' answered Rupert; 'he is an artist, like myself, who happens to be staying here.'

'And who is painting Lady May's portrait, I suppose.' She spoke like one to whom the name of Lady May was familiar.

'No,' said he, wondering who the lady was; '*I* am painting the portrait. I should rather use the past tense, for it is finished.'

'Then you are Mr. Glanville, the other artist,' she replied; 'I heard my father speak of you. But I did not know there were two artists at Trelingham.'

Rupert wondered still more. 'Mr. Mardol,' he said, 'is more properly an engraver, not an artist. But may I inquire who it was that spoke of me?'

'My father,' she repeated, 'Colonel Valence. Did you not meet him in Trelingham churchyard the afternoon of the great storm? He told me that you had had some conversation in the porch while it thundered and lightened. He mentioned your name several times before he went away.'

This was like opening a flood-gate. The notion that he was talking with Colonel Valence's daughter awakened a whole train of questions in Rupert's mind. He forgot that the lady was standing in the Hermitage, where apparently she had no business to be, and that he himself was a stranger to her.

'Has Colonel Valence gone?' he cried. 'I should have liked—I was hoping to meet him again. Our conversation was so extraordinary that I did not know what to make of it, and it has puzzled me ever since. But I beg your pardon, Miss Valence. It is impertinent of me to say all this.'

'Why, no,' she answered; 'not if I could tell you what my father meant, as I daresay would not be impossible. He shares his thoughts with me.'

'Shares his thoughts with her!' said Glanville to himself;

'how many of his thoughts, I wonder?' He mentally compared the scarred and saturnine face of the old man with the beautiful open countenance of his daughter. She did not seem made for a philosophy in which the last word was universal shipwreck.

'Some of Colonel Valence's thoughts are very stern,' he said aloud.

'Too stern, indeed,' answered the young lady with a sigh. 'I wish some one would convert him to a gentler mood. But we live utterly alone; and when he does mix with other human beings, they are men like himself, of earnest, daring temper. We pay a price for the new world that is coming.'

She spoke with calmness and decision, looking as child-like now in her serious utterances as when she was alluding to the bears and the fairy tale.

'Do you hold that a new world is coming?' he asked, with some astonishment in his tone, which Miss Valence's ear detected. 'A new world?'

'Surely I do,' she answered. 'Are not the signs of it everywhere? I should have imagined, since you are an artist, that you would be one of the first to think so, too. Have you no share in the "prophetic soul of the wide world, dreaming on things to come"? My father calls the true artist a seer of the ideal which in other men lies dormant. He is enthusiastic about art, especially painting. It is the only enjoyment he has.'

Rupert was struck with a sudden thought. 'Has Colonel Valence heard that I have been engaged on Lady May's portrait?' he inquired. It occurred to him that Colonel Valence would wish to be informed of the accident to his Madonna. And what if he would, Rupert? Do you think *that* a sufficient excuse for renewing your acquaintance with him, or for combating his philosophy, and looking at your ease on the countenance of this young lady while you do so? Oh no; it was nothing so hypocritical. Of course not. But if the Colonel had endured such hardships to bring the picture from Spain, it would be only charitable to tell him about it. In the last few moments he had become more amiable in Glanville's eyes.

'I do not think he has,' she replied. 'The day after the storm he went to London. He will not return for a long while. He stays very little at Falside now.'

'Is Falside your home?' Rupert did not reflect how he was violating all the proprieties. How dared he be so inquisitive? I wonder Miss Valence was not offended. But she seemed not to mind. Instead of at once insisting on being taken to her boat, she answered:

'My father was born at Falside, and we have lived there since my mother's death.'

'Oh, since Lady Alice's death?' exclaimed Rupert, completely off his guard. 'But is not that a great while ago?'

'Lady Alice was not my mother,' she answered quietly; 'she was my father's first wife.'

'And she lies in Trelingham churchyard,' said Glanville. 'Was that why Colonel Valence came out on that bitter afternoon?'

'Yes,' she replied; 'he spends many afternoons there. But do you know the story of Lady Alice?' she went on.

'I happen,' he said, 'to have heard the beginning of it. That is all. I know the romantic circumstances under which Lady Alice left her home and married. But I know no more; the thread of the story has not been resumed.'

'There is little more to know,' she answered. 'Lady Alice died in London, after eleven or twelve years of married life. Then my father went abroad. You perhaps have heard that he was engaged in the campaigns against Don Carlos, and received his commission in Spain. He has never been in the English army. He was a soldier of liberty, not the defender of a state or a sovereign.'

'And did Lady Alice leave no children?'

'No; I have neither brother nor sister. That is why it would be so pleasant to find a sister in Lady May. We are not relatives, of course, and she is a good deal older than I. But when I see her driving near Falside, as she sometimes does, or wandering down by the shore, I am often tempted to speak to her and beg her friendship.'

Glanville thought, while she spoke, what a striking contrast they would make. Lady May, although not taller than the average, had a stateliness of manner which seemed

to add to her height; she was dark and almost foreign-looking with her great piercing eyes, long eyelashes, and, as the poets say in describing this type of beauty, her ebon tresses, that naturally suggested a crown or a chaplet of purple flowers to set them off. She moved slowly, and had nothing of the tripping fairy in her motions. The expression of her countenance was earnest and impassioned. And what was Colonel Valence's daughter like? Rupert found it necessary to study her features with great attention; he might be asked some day to paint her portrait; or what if he sketched it from memory when he went home, and laid it up in his portfolio? There could be no harm in doing that. He wondered, by the way, what her name was. How could he find out without appearing over-curious? Hers was a slender form, graceful as Arethusa's, or the mountain-nymph's whose home is among rocks and streams, where all day long she roams, climbing, or springing, or dancing, as best pleases her, seldom quiet except when she has tired herself out with play. Her countenance was clear and well-cut, of that exquisite pale olive which is the least English of tones, resembling fine ivory. And those innocent brown eyes, how softly they gazed at the audacious painter! how tender and steadfast was their expression! They had caught a golden-tawny hue from the ringlets of sunny hair falling about her face, among which the breeze coming in at the open window played wantonly. Such a combination of light and dark in the human countenance he had never beheld. The exquisite shape might be matched, perhaps, did he know where to look for it, in sylph or fairy. But could sylph or fairy boast of that serious, calm, aerial loveliness which shone out, so young and so unconscious, from the pale ivory features and the soft eyes? Not knowing what had been said or what he was saying, Rupert drew a step nearer, and in a beseeching voice, as if he must fall on his knee and worship whilst he spoke, the words came from his lips in a half-whisper, 'Would you tell me—nay, be angry if you will, but tell me—what, by what name may I remember you?'

The lady blushed almost scarlet now. Her pale cheek

showed a deep, passionate tinge, and even her forehead was dyed in a faint rose-colour, which grew purple as she answered:

'Sir! how dare you?' She had got no further when she saw Rupert at her feet.

'Oh, forgive me,' he said; 'I could not—I did not know what I was saying. For the world I would not offend you.'

There was something in his tone which melted her. No, he had not meant to offend; he was only overcome, fascinated, out of himself. How is it that love reveals its presence? She could not speak for a moment; and her voice when it came back was, like Rupert's, almost inarticulate. 'Rise,' she said; 'do not kneel there.'

And as he stood before her, ashamed, penitent, his eyes seeking the ground, she went on, not looking at him—'My name is Hippolyta.'

'Ah,' he said, laughing passionately, 'I knew you came out of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Titania should be jealous of you.'

'Again, sir!' she cried, going to the door; 'stand aside and let me pass.' She would not even look at him. It was all he could do not to fall at her feet again.

'Not like that,' he exclaimed. 'Oh, not like that. What shall I do if you go away despising me? I am mad; I have lost my senses. But I will not, I will not offend any more.' She had reached the verandah. He followed, ran down the steps and began to unfasten the boat.

While they were speaking it had grown stormy on the lake; there was a strong backwater driven by the rising wind, and the waves, though not large, seemed dangerous for a light skiff, such as Hippolyta had come in. She did not appear to notice the weather; her face was still flushed and her eyes bright with tears. Rupert could have bitten his tongue off when he thought of the liberty he had taken. He felt more than ashamed—he was humiliated. A gentleman, he, Rupert Glanville, to have behaved so, to have spoken such words! He turned with a deprecating look towards Hippolyta as she came slowly down the steps. She could not pass him. She stopped.

'Miss Valence,' he said humbly, 'this small boat is not

safe in such stormy weather. Will you allow me to fetch the larger one, which is lying in the boathouse opposite, and to row you to shore?'

'I will allow nothing,' she answered; 'I did wrong to come here. Let me pass into the boat.'

Glanville saw that the storm would be upon them ere long. He said, firmly this time, like a man who is doing what he knows to be right, 'I cannot let you risk your life, Miss Valence. If you will not wait till I can bring the safer boat you must allow me to take charge of this. A very few minutes will see you on shore.'

Reluctantly Hippolyta consented. When there is danger and a man commands, a woman does not find it easy to disobey. She entered the boat and sat down, while Rupert took the oars. Not a word more was spoken. Hippolyta looked over the side of the skiff, away in the distance, as if no Rupert existed. It was all she could do to keep the tears from falling. A sharp sense of pain, almost of degradation, filled her heart. Perhaps there was another feeling too, which she knew little about, although it gave an edge to the pain. She sprang out as soon as the boat touched. But before she could quite flee away, Rupert was at her side, bareheaded.

'I beg your pardon,' he said in a low voice. His head was bent. She saw that he was biting his under lip to keep down some strong emotion. His breath went and came. But she would not pity him. Half sobbing, with tremulous indignation, breaking her sentences into short phrases, she said, turning to the abashed and guilty artist:

'I came out of childish curiosity, and—and I have been punished. Tell Lord Trelingham, if you please, that I wanted to see the chalet, that I did not know—and I had never seen it, and my father said . . . but it does not matter.'

Her voice broke down. She was fairly crying now. Rupert did not dare to come near her; he could not leave her in distress; he knew not which way to look. Oh, what a villain he had been! But he must speak.

'I would give my life that this had not happened,' he cried. 'Miss Valence, I implore you, think no more of it.

Indeed, indeed, I meant no harm. I was beside myself. Cannot you forgive one who has never seen——' he stopped, he was near committing himself again. Hippolyta listened, like a child that leaves off crying when it hears a well-known voice. She could control herself better now, and Rupert was very sorry. He had really been carried away by a sudden impulse. She resolved not to forgive him, all the same. One more glance she gave at the artist as he stood, like a culprit or a penitent, speechless in the presence of his offended goddess. And then she ran up the ascent till she was out of breath and compelled to rest against a tree.

Glanville lifted his face when he saw her depart, and looked, and looked, all turned to gazing, until she disappeared amid the thick undergrowth. Then, as if wings had been added to his feet, and he were Apollo that had borrowed the sandals of Hermes in pursuit of Daphne, the young man followed, not knowing why he did so, unless it were that another moment of the intoxicating vision seemed well worth flying after. Hippolyta had run fast but not far. On the soft grass she heard no steps, and when Rupert came in sight of her again he beheld the gentle Amazon unfastening her palfrey—call it not, I beseech you, either cob or pony—which was receiving his mistress with manifestations of joy as she came up to the place where he was tethered. Rupert, gliding behind the friendly covert of the trees, watched her every movement. She was excited and out of breath, but evidently not much frightened. From time to time as she stopped to put her handkerchief to her eyes a pang shot through Rupert's heart. Yes, she was crying still, poor Hippolyta; and this rude swain did not dare to show that he was anywhere at hand, still less could he venture on addressing her with more apologies. What would he not have given to help her to her saddle! He had lost the grace that might have been his for a foolish word. Oh, wild human heart and hasty tongue, can nothing put a check upon you? Hippolyta patted her steed, which was a small dark roan, with beautifully-shaped intelligent head,—I do not quite know how veterinary persons would describe what I mean,

but the whole head, and not the eyes or nostrils only, looked intelligent, instinct with a higher life than good feeding and grooming could bring out. But neither were these neglected, as the glossy sleekness of the creature testified. Hippolyta, I say, patted his beautiful head, and, being utterly unaware that there was a spectator of her actions, put an arm round his neck and kissed him on the forehead. Rupert bit his lip again. Young man, that is your punishment for spying and gazing where you ought not to be! Hippolyta vaulted into the saddle with the lightness of a bird, gave the reins a shake, and was off like an arrow. Hermes's sandals were now of no avail. Rupert saw that she was taking the road which led up stream, and, as he supposed, to Falside. Oh, that he might follow!

He did not move from the spot where he beheld her vanish until many minutes were passed. Then, like a man waking from a heavy dream, he shook himself, looked round, and remembering that he had left the boat unmoored, went with slow meditative steps down the glade. How many hours were gone since his feet had trodden it first that morning? He could not tell. Reckoned by emotions it might be a century or two. He forgot even luncheon; and, instead of returning like a sensible mortal to the Hermitage where good things were to be had for the cooking, he simply fastened the skiff, which by a happy chance had drifted into some low tangle of branches and thus been kept from floating farther away. This done, Rupert ascended the glade for the second time, and finding a bleak and wild-looking country when he reached the top, plunged recklessly into it. He would have given half his genius, which was worth more than half the kingdom of many monarchs, to come within view of Falside. But the venture was too daring, and rather than yield to temptation he set off in the other direction.

It had begun to rain, and he had much better have returned to Trelingham instead of wandering on and on, not taking note of the way he was going, nor observing that the fine small drops, more like mist than wholesome rain, were wetting him through. His whole mind was absorbed in what had happened. Was it the one event of his life,

the golden day for which he had been waiting since he knew the name of love, the unveiling of the face that in dreams he had beheld and longed after; or was it an irreparable mischance? 'Hippolyta, Hippolyta,' he murmured to himself. 'Oh, senseless Rupert, did you think the wedding could be without the wooing?' It was the most unmanly thing he had ever done. 'And yet,' he went on, 'she ought to have known that I meant only to worship her.' He smiled when the words, uttered half aloud, struck upon his ear. 'How could she have known what I meant? She had never set eyes on me. Are my looks so innocent as hers? Childlike, divine Hippolyta!' He fell into delicious, delirious musing. He must see her, speak to her again, win her pardon, protest that he would spend his life in atoning for the insolence of the morning. Yes, it was insolence. To ask her name! But she had answered; she told him it was Hippolyta. That could never be undone. The bond between them was of her making, after all. And she had spoken in a whisper, with what heavenly shame in her accent, as though resisting the suggestion which made her answer while yielding to it! Love, ah no, it was not love, but pity, modesty, the exquisite compassion of Hippolyta, who was a queen yet a child. In this way he babbled for hours—this great incontestable genius, walking at random and getting wet to the skin, and not minding, but with a heart all on flame, and love spreading out his golden pinions till the gray heavens seemed to melt and burn in their splendour. It was first love, the true deity and no counterfeit, whose wine, held out with coaxing gesture and half-smiling, half-frowning glance, intoxicated him when he put the cup to his lips. He rested now and then for a moment, stopping to enjoy the unmatchable emotion that had conquered him. But to keep still was impossible. He must go forward, and utter his feelings incoherently to himself as he went, smiling with a mixture of tenderness and scorn at the expressions that alone would come, the large, wild metaphors taken from all things in heaven and earth, the brief, sudden snatches of inebriation cutting short his speech altogether from time to time. He was not only a lover, but an artist whose intense fancy

penetrated his nature through and through, being the fine spirit that made his genius what it was. He could not love as the common man loves; the passion he felt was individual, characteristic; it glowed with another fire than that which draws man and woman to have one heart in two bodies; for it aimed at a union of soul with soul, of all that was best in him with all that he imagined in Hippolyta. Do I say imagined? Well, be it so. But he would have rebuked the word. In that strange, lovely face, in those tender eyes, he saw the revelations of a personality as choice and adorable as they were. Could any spirit of clay inform such a tenement? Thus he would have argued. But while he wandered through the clinging mist, absorbed in the contemplation of Hippolyta, beholding her in memory with the vividness of intuition which a new love bestows, he was far indeed from argument of any kind. He was drinking deep at the fountain of perpetual youth; he was roaming through Eldorado; the world was a garden of roses, and he saw Hippolyta riding on her dark palfrey over mead and mossy glade, turning towards him as she fled and bidding him follow.

It is dangerous to be lost in thought, but even more dangerous to be lost on a trackless down; and this was what had now befallen Rupert. Without noticing that he had long since left the belt of trees which marked the high ridge he had ascended, by degrees he exchanged one path for another, until he was now actually travelling the opposite way to that which he intended. Soon there was no semblance of a track; he was on the heather, guided unconsciously by the figures of the great crags which loomed up through the mist when he came near them. But he did not stop to choose his direction. The tourist of the morning, bent on adventures, was likely to meet with one now; for he had become no better than a somnambulist, and might at any moment have plunged out of his depth into the boggy streams which rise on the moor and creep through the high grass with imperceptible motion. Fortunately, a strong breeze was blowing the mist aside; and the last short hour of the October day promised to be fair, and to be succeeded by a

calm evening. As Rupert, somewhat exhausted with his violent emotions and headlong walk, was sitting on a huge boulder at the foot of the crag for which he had been making the last ten minutes, a final gust scattered the clouds right and left, the rain ceased, and a long lane of sunshine, forming in the space which the mist had left clear, took him up into its radiance. His face was towards the sun and his eyes were too dazzled to make out anything; but almost as the clouds rolled away he heard the galloping of a horse near at hand. He did not look up; the growing sense of fatigue had brought with it some depression; the wings of love were drooping, and he had begun to think more of the offence given than the return of affection he hoped for. But the sound of galloping came nearer; the horse stopped within a few paces of where he sat. And Hippolyta Valence, leaping to the ground, exclaimed in a troubled and astonished voice, 'Mr. Glanville, are you here? What has happened to you?'

CHAPTER XIV

IN FAIRYLAND

HE made no reply. The apparition was so sudden, so utterly unexpected, and the light, whether of the sun or of Hippolyta's presence, so filled his eyes that he had not a word to say. He looked strangely forlorn, in spite of the air of distinction and the beauty of feature which made him, when his feathers were preened, an Arabian bird among artists. The lonesome moor, with its streak of watery sunshine, the huge overshadowing cliffs, the shining grass and thunderous purple of the heather, gave a setting to the figure and appearance of Rupert which disclosed more of the inward man, the melancholy, brooding spirit, than was often visible. Hippolyta was struck silent. She waited now, uncertain whether she ought to have accosted him, until he should speak.

He rose with a fatigued expression, looked round, and said, as if to himself, 'I must have lost my way.' He did not seem to notice the young lady; nor can I affirm that during the first few moments he had distinguished between the vision in his brain and the form that came galloping over the moor.

'If you were going to Trelingham,' replied Hippolyta, 'you have certainly lost it. The Court is sixteen miles off, and in the opposite direction to this.'

Glanville was fully awake now. 'I am much obliged for the information, Miss Valence,' he answered in a conventional tone, 'and shall be grateful if you can point out the road. I have never been in this part of the country.'

'There is no road,' she told him; 'you are on the

moor. And, if there were, you could not walk sixteen miles before nightfall. The sun will be down in less than an hour.'

'I must get back,' repeated Glanville. He gave an exploring glance over the country, hoping to see a human habitation if not a village or hamlet. It was all wild and bare. Hippolyta had said truly; he was on the moor; there was not the vestige of a track. He had been walking over the heather and did not notice it. What was to be done?

The young lady reflected, and seemed to have made up her mind while he was looking about him. 'You cannot get back this way,' she said, 'nor is it the slightest use to attempt it. You would be lost in the mosses which you have passed without seeing them, I suppose. But Falside is hardly a mile off, and you can there be put on the right road. Do come, Mr. Glanville,' she said insistently, for he showed no sign of accepting her invitation.

Now he looked at her and smiled, though still in his melancholy fashion. 'I will come,' he said, 'if you can forgive me. Not,' he added, 'that you ought. I know I am inexcusable. But, if you will not overlook my great fault, I must stay here until morning. I can make my way back in the light.'

'Stay until morning, and be frozen! No, indeed,' cried Hippolyta, 'that you shall not. Come now, show that you know how to be obedient to a lady.' She was smiling without an effort, in the most kindly way. 'I do forgive you. Artists are strange people. One cannot treat them like the rest of mankind.'

'You forgive me!' exclaimed Rupert; 'I will follow you to the end of the world.'

She held up a warning finger. 'No, only to Falside,' she said.

He helped her to mount, and, in a dream of sweet intoxication, walked by her side as she rode quietly along. She did not ask him any questions. How he had got thither was evident—by losing his way But what made him lose his way? If Hippolyta guessed at the reason, she kept her conjectures in her own breast. Occasionally

she glanced down at him; but when he looked up, with something of that half-foolish and wholly ecstatic smile on his lips which betokens a young man's first sensations of happiness, she was discreetly gazing over the moor. She was glad she had forgiven him. He must have undergone a self-inflicted penance since she ran away from him on landing out of the boat. Perhaps he had gone into the rain and wandered all those hours to punish himself for his rudeness. At any rate, he was too haggard and woe-begone to be severely dealt with now. She would really forgive; nay, she would try to forget.

Rupert, thinking neither of the past nor the future, but as happy as a dog following his mistress, kept on walking mechanically, and did not even ask when they should arrive at Falside. He did not want to arrive there. It was enough for him to be near Hippolyta. Had she proposed to ride to the other end of the rainbow which he beheld spanning the moor, he would have said, 'Why not? let us go by all means. We shall perhaps find the golden cup the children talk of now we are together.' I doubt that her pony would have consented so willingly. When they passed certain rocks and turned to the left, that little beast shook himself and began to express a decided wish to canter. Hippolyta pulled him in. 'No, Djalma,' she said, 'you must be patient. Mr. Glanville would not care to keep up with you at a trot after his day's expedition. We shall cross your old friend, the Yale, in a minute,' she said, turning to the artist. 'It rises a little way off, and comes down into our valley on its journey to Trelingham.'

As she spoke they came to a narrow wooden bridge, which Djalma crossed at a quickened pace, and a few yards in front Rupert saw a good, well-preserved pathway leading down between rock and wilderness into the hollow. Trees began to peer up, there were breadths of cover right and left a little farther on, and the sound of murmuring leaves and waters filled the air. Hippolyta struck through the wood like one who was familiar with every step of it; Rupert followed close; and they came out after ten minutes' slow riding upon another road, not so broad as the first,

which, turning very abruptly, brought them to a garden-gate overshadowed with foliage. Rupert ran to open the gate. He could see only a short distance in front, for the trees overarched and came down so close that it seemed as if they were entering another wood. But soon they reached a second entrance, clear of trees, and flanked on either side by a low wall, which permitted a view into the valley and across to the neighbouring heights. It was a ravine, at the head of which, on a projecting terrace near the waterfall, rose in picturesque beauty the gables of a double cottage. 'That is Falside,' said Hippolyta, pointing with her whip. 'You are welcome, Mr. Glanville.' She did not wait for his thanks or his assistance, but dismounting and throwing him the reins, she added, 'Will you kindly hold Djalma while I go and call some one?' Saying which she went rapidly up the path and disappeared round a corner of the cottage. If Rupert could have made sure of being unobserved, I think he too would have put his arm round the pony's neck and saluted him on the forehead. But he was prudent. No more risks through excess of demonstration for him. Djalma, therefore, had to be content with much patting and caressing, which, like all beings accustomed to adoration, he took as a matter of course. He was wondering when the groom would come, and not attending to Rupert at all.

When the groom did arrive he was by no means of that spruce description which is usual in great English houses like Trelingham Court. He was an old man with white hair and an exceedingly wrinkled forehead, dressed in plain rough clothes, more suitable to a gardener or man-of-all-work than to the guardian of so beautiful and well-kept a steed as Djalma. His eyes, which were very dark and glittering, made it clear that he was some kind of foreigner, to say nothing of the expressive gesture, indicating a doubt or a question, as Rupert fancied, with which on seeing the artist he turned to Miss Valence. She merely shook her head and bade Rupert relinquish the reins, which he did unwillingly, as one that gives up a beloved charge. 'Now,' said Hippolyta, 'will you come into the drawing-room while Djalma is taken round to the stable and Andres gets your

own room ready? He was not expecting a guest, or you might go with him at once.'

Rupert obeyed, not being clear in his own mind as to what was proper or becoming. He said when they passed the threshold, 'Is it not possible for me to go on at once to Trelingham? I ought not to trespass on your hospitality. I thought you spoke of putting me on my right road when we reached Falside.'

'The way is plain enough from here,' answered Hippolyta, 'but almost as long as your journey across the moor. And if you could only see, Mr. Glanville, how tired you look——' A thought seemed to flash across her mind while she was speaking, and she examined his face with no less attention than he had bestowed on hers in the chalet. 'I do believe,' she went on, 'that you are more than tired. Have you eaten anything since breakfast?'

Glanville entreated her not to trouble herself about so small a matter. He had not, in fact, eaten or drunk since the morning, and was beginning to feel the effects of his involuntary fast. But Hippolyta, with the woman's feeling that men are always ready to eat and cannot, like themselves, live on three grains of rice a day, was shocked to hear it. She begged him to sit near the fire and not stir till she came back. Then, running hastily out of the room, she left him to his own reflections, which were not disagreeable, but had lasted only a few minutes when she returned, bearing the requisites for afternoon tea, as Rupert would have said in any other drawing-room. Here it was probably not tea, but ambrosia, nectar, the amrita cup,—some enchanting draught with immortality among its ingredients. Hippolyta set the tray down; and, with a smile, remarked to the artist: 'I cannot offer you wine, for my father does not drink it or suffer it near him. I fancy that tea will do you more good. Andres will show you to your room when you have taken a cup and feel warm enough to leave the fire; and we shall dine as soon as possible.'

Rupert was more and more embarrassed, though happier than words can express. Was he to dine alone with Hippolyta? The gods be thanked. But what would men, and

especially women, say? It was like getting into heaven by a forbidden door. He could not refuse; neither could he suggest that there were difficulties, that the world had its customs. Suggest such a thing to Hippolyta, who moved about with the grace and security of a young maiden in her own home, busy, unaffected, and the very picture of innocence! 'Oh, Mrs. Grundy,' he thought with a sigh, 'how terrible and absurd is thy dominion over the souls of men!'

It did not appear that Hippolyta minded Mrs. Grundy in any way. She was the princess receiving a shipwrecked mariner into her palace; a beneficent Calypso, to whom the rumours of the world did not penetrate, as she dwelt in her sequestered island, amusing herself with divine songs and a quick-footed steed. Had she no servants but Andres? The place seemed silent, buried in deep sleep. No footfall was heard about it; no sound but the murmuring cascade; no voice within or without. Neither did Hippolyta appear to expect attendance. Did she abide all alone, like this, whenever Colonel Valence was absent? She had described him as living very little at Falside. It was an extraordinary manner of passing her existence for a young girl, especially one so bright and vivacious as Hippolyta. Was it imaginable that she liked or could endure it long? At this point in his meditations the lady offered him a cup of the ambrosia she had been preparing. It was very good. Rupert felt like a new being when he had drunk it; moreover, he secretly resolved to look upon it as the enchanting draught which henceforth bound him to exist under the governance and in the toils of Hippolyta. It was her own doing, and he would always plead it in excuse if she wished him to become a stranger again. But that he thought impossible after the events of the day.

'Do you live at Falside by yourself?' he ventured to ask.

'It depends on my father,' she replied; 'I see nothing, and I desire to see nothing, of what is called the world. No fashionable lady ever comes to me, and the only one I wish to know is Lady May Davenant. But Falside, though solitary just now, is not so for the most part. My father

calls it the refuge of the destitute. There is seldom a month that some unfortunate man, pursued by the continental police, does not make his way to our retreat. The room you will sleep in to-night has been a hiding-place for the most distinguished revolutionists, from Mazzini to Felix Pyat. So that it is no new thing, you see,' she added, laughing, 'for me to receive an illustrious guest.'

'You must have gone through a strange experience,' said Rupert. 'But you cannot, I suppose, have seen the older men who are Colonel Valence's contemporaries. They have succeeded; and now, if still living, they sit in the high places of the world.'

'That is true,' she replied; 'I never saw Mazzini, for example. Those I know best are the men of the latest time, cosmopolitan and socialist rather than patriotic.'

'Do they interest you in life as much as they might in a book?' Rupert could not refrain from this question, but his curiosity was not altogether personal. Hippolyta did not resemble the masculine creature to whom he would have attributed a love of socialist theories or schemes of revolution.

'The men less than their doctrines, and not so much as their adventures,' was her unexpected reply. 'Like the saints of all religions, they are repulsive until you come to know them. But I am quite willing to minister to their wants. It is the only way in which I can help the good cause. Some, too, have a strangely captivating eloquence, like Kossuth. But he and the Hungarians belong to the aristocracy of revolution; and now they have set their crown of St. Stephen on the head of an anointed king, I fear that they will think no more of their down-trodden brethren all over Europe. Even Kossuth, with his hatred of the House of Austria, is at heart a political revolutionist and nothing more.'

She spoke warmly, and Rupert listened with admiration and surprise. He did not pretend to feel much with those that desire universal change. He was an artist, and dreaded the advent of democracy. But he could have worshipped any doctrine which came to him impersonated in such a form. However, he was spared making his

profession of faith; for Andres, coming in as Hippolyta finished speaking, announced that the stranger's room was ready. Glanville rose. He could think of more things than one at a time, and he had made up his mind, while reflecting on Hippolyta's eloquence, as to what it behoved him to do.

'Miss Valence,' he said, going up to her, 'I can never thank you for such great kindness as you have done and intend for me. But I am quite sure that I ought to return to Trelingham. They did not know I was going any distance; I meant to have been at the Court for luncheon. And Lord Trelingham is so considerate, so nervous, too, since the shipwreck, that if I stay out they will spend the night in looking for me.'

He spoke reasonably, and Hippolyta was persuaded. She insisted only that he should stay for dinner. Andres, who was their coachman when they required one, would drive him, not over the moor, but round by the good roads on that side of the country. It would take time, but save mishaps, and Trelingham might be reached before midnight. When these things were clear Rupert followed Andres, who took him out of the cottage, and by a covered way up some steps into another building, almost as large, that stood behind it and contained kitchen, housekeeper's room, and two or three guest-chambers. An ancient lady, as un-English in appearance as Andres,—she was his wife,—now took charge of Glanville, and led him upstairs to a small and plainly furnished room, where she left him without a word. It was the way at Falside to do everything as silently as possible. All manner of strange guests came thither, many of whom spoke no English and bore no particular name while under Colonel Valence's roof. Whether Glanville was a refugee or an ordinary wayfarer who had been lost on the moor did not signify to the helpmate of Andres, nor did the good man enlighten her. An old revolutionist himself, he had asked in dumb show, on seeing him, whether Rupert was one of theirs. Hippolyta had used the English fashion of shaking her head to say no, and Andres, by this time somewhat naturalised, understood, but was not quite certain.

Rupert came quickly down again, and entered the drawing-room. But he found no Hippolyta. He had leisure to look about him now, for he had observed nothing but Miss Valence's face and motions while she was making tea. It was a library rather than a drawing-room, with bookshelves round the walls, and otherwise somewhat solidly furnished. But a nice disorder, and the presence of flowers and needle-work, were signs that Hippolyta made it her usual abode. On examining the shelves he saw books in every European language,—some with extraordinary titles, betokening new systems of philosophy or of government, and a large number of modern poets and novelists. Among the latter were works he had never come across, which it surprised him to see in a lady's collection. But he reflected that, in all likelihood, it was Colonel Valence and not Hippolyta who studied these daring romances. He could not associate her with the books that were there.

She came in while he was looking at them. 'My father is a great reader,' she said, 'and has taught me, too, how to read. He prefers for enjoyment the ancient authors. So do I, I think. They have a calming influence when one's mind has been excited by the works of living men and women.'

'Do you read Greek, then?' inquired Glanville, taking out a handsomely bound volume, the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which happened to be in front of him.

'I suppose I may say yes,' was her answer. 'I have been learning it for some years. I can read *Antigone*, and know it almost by heart. What a noble character she was! Like some other Greek women she deserved to belong to the new era.'

'Then you know these lines?' said Glanville, turning to a passage I need not transcribe, for it is, like the landscapes round Vesuvius and the Campanian coast, a possession of modern times as of antiquity,—the marvellous scene where Antigone, standing at first with head bent to the ground in the presence of Creon, lifts up voice and eyes, saying that neither Zeus, nor Righteousness, assessor of the gods, had established among men the law which she had violated in burying her brother.

'Know them?' cried Hippolyta; 'how should I not? They sound in my ears as the very gospel of eternal right for woman.' And taking the volume from him, she read in tones of strong feeling the lines that come after, at once so calm and pathetic. 'Imagine,' she said, when she had come to the end of the passage, 'can you imagine a woman of our time, brought up as most are, saying, in the face of social ordinances, base, unjust, and cruel, words like these—if the poor version I once made gives their meaning? Antigone says to the King:

> '"Such mighty heraldings I never dreamed,
> Mortal, were thine as could prevail to break
> The gods' unwritten and unshaken laws:
> Not of to-day or yesterday are these,
> They live from everlasting, nor doth man
> Behold the source when they to light have risen."

How often has the whole artificial polity of men seemed to dissolve under the charm of an appeal like this to nature, to the truth of things, against the untruths which make the world poor and contemptible! Antigone will always be a type of the true woman. Do you not think so?'

'You ask a terrible question,' replied Glanville. 'Antigone died in obedience to commands which she thought to be from the gods. And you know they were nothing of the kind. More is the pity! Could it signify to Polynices whether his dead body were eaten by kites and eagles, or buried with libations? Antigone died the martyr of a custom.'

Hippolyta looked sad while he was speaking. 'Ah,' she said, 'I did not think you would view her in that light. She was the martyr of sisterly devotion, which is an eternal law, not of custom. But have you no feeling, then, about the grave of any one you have loved?' Her voice sank a little; she was grieved.

'Do not, pray do not misinterpret me,' exclaimed Rupert eagerly. 'I think Antigone one of the purest and most unselfish of heroines. Nor would I blame her tenderness to the beloved dust of a brother. But it is the way with us men to do battle for a cause rather

than for a person, or—how shall I say?—for an emblem.'

'And women—for what do they give themselves?' she inquired, still speaking in the low sweet voice, with its touch of sadness. Rupert fixed his eyes on her, not daringly, but with a light shining out of them as he made answer.

'For love,' said he.

She was silent. She closed the volume and restored it to its place. A moment after dinner was announced, and they passed into the dining-room. It was not so large as the one they had left, and looked out on another side of the cottage. A bright fire was burning in the grate. Andres, who had forgotten to draw the curtains, now shut out the October night, which seemed raw and chill. Hippolyta motioned Rupert to a seat at the bottom of the table and took her place opposite him. She had none of that trembling shyness that might have been expected in one so young. Evidently she had been accustomed to receive guests and entertain them in the self-possessed way she used towards the artist. He felt that the *tête-à-tête* meant less than he had imagined. Hippolyta had no need to keep him at a distance. She seemed to have forgotten their meeting at the Hermitage altogether.

But it was not so. After dealing with indifferent topics, she came back to it of her own accord. 'I suppose,' she said, smiling, 'it was a social ordinance that I should not have taken the boat and explored a sacred dwelling like the chalet as I did to-day. However, it was not a command of the gods; and my conscience leaves me at rest.'

Glanville was sure that Lord Trelingham would have been delighted to show her over the Hermitage. It was a pity that his own friend, Ivor Mardol, had not been there to welcome her; he was exceedingly proud of having such a quaint habitation, and made a very tolerable hermit, too.

'Yes,' answered Hippolyta, 'though I know Lord Trelingham only by report, I have a great affection for him.

Every one says he is the kindest of men. But a reconciliation between him and my father has long been out of the question. I do not think my father bears him malice; and I daresay Lord Trelingham would take his hand, if it were offered, which it never will be. I could not have asked his permission to visit the chalet. Yet I have long wished to see the inside of it. Riding that way, it is provoking to pass so many times in sight of a curious, uninhabited house, with strange stories attaching to it, and memories of my father and grandfather, both of whom spent weeks at a time there when they were young. I have often told my father I should like to go over it.'

'And what did he say?' asked Rupert.

'Oh, he was indifferent. He tells me that I have no part in the quarrel between himself and Lord Trelingham. Not being Lady Alice's daughter, I am really a stranger to the Davenants, who perhaps never heard of me. But I should not have cared to hurt his feelings by visiting the chalet when he was at home. I shall tell him, of course. At a distance he will have other things to think of, and he will not mind.'

The dinner could not last long. Though no wine appeared on the table, it was one of the pleasantest in Rupert's life. He must go now; and Hippolyta, with the thoughtless cruelty of a young lady who was not in love, when she saw that he had no greatcoat or other defence against the night air, insisted on his wrapping himself in a soft woollen shawl which was assuredly no part of Colonel Valence's apparel. The foolish young man was now quite enough intoxicated not to recover from his state of delirium so long as the remembrance of that night stayed with him. Hippolyta, on bidding him good-bye, detained him for a moment. 'If,' she said, 'when you are telling your adventures at Trelingham, you will assure Lady May that I have always wanted to make her acquaintance—I should rather say, to have her for a friend—and that Colonel Valence knows and does not disapprove, you will be doing me a kindness, and,' she continued, with a little more colour coming into her cheeks, 'you will atone for the

impetuosity of this morning, which I forgive the artist because—because,' she concluded merrily, 'he seems to have no difficulty in losing himself.'

Rupert promised, of course. What would he not have promised? It was another link between them. He knew from Lady May's silence, from her never mentioning Falside or Colonel Valence's daughter, that no other way of conveying it could be open to Hippolyta. So much the better. It made him, in a sort, her representative, her accredited ambassador at Trelingham. But one thing remained which, in spite of his devotion or because of it, he had not promised, which nothing short of necessity should compel him to do; and that was to mention where and how he had met Hippolyta. Their meeting, he said to himself, was in a realm with which strangers and denizens of the everyday world had nought to do —in the kingdom of poetry, in Fairyland. Should he tell Lord Trelingham that he had dreamt a midsummer night's dream on an autumn morning? Not though his reward should be,—he stopped when he came to this reflection. For the sentence would have ended by bestowing on him the hand of Lady May. He was sitting in the dogcart by the side of the old coachman, Andres; and, if he blushed, the dark night concealed his shame. Twenty-four hours ago and less he had been resolved to ask Lord Trelingham for his daughter. Had the incident of the morning not taken place he must to-morrow have been uniting his fortune with that of a lady whom he did not love, whom he had never at any time loved. What an escape! He knew the difference now. A single day had sufficed to show him his delusion. Was he grieved on Lady May's account? Love has been defined as *l'égoisme à deux*. Rupert was in love with Hippolyta, and for him the Earl's daughter was merely a lady whose portrait he had painted. I do not say he would have summed the position in these harsh words; but, it is quite true, the first hours of love are like a deep delirium wherein the patient sees only what imagination bodies forth. The world of reality slips away into unfathomable waters and is found no more. Lady May had ceased to mesmerise him.

It was a pitch-dark night. Andres had received his instructions from Hippolyta, and drove warily along, neither making a remark nor troubled at the artist's silence. They might have been travelling towards the centre of the earth or through a succession of coal-pits for all that was visible on either side. Glanville, who had a horror of darkness, grew tired and fell into a dose which was perpetually interrupted by the jolting of the vehicle over stones and rough ground, or stopping to ascertain where the road turned. Several times Andres dismounted to make certain that they were not passing the cross lanes from Falside to Trelingham. It was weary work, made endurable to Glanville only by remembering that he was wrapped in Hippolyta's woollen shawl, which he meant not to return, if Andres could be got to overlook it, until he had an opportunity of thanking its owner in person. What ridiculous image and relic worshippers are all the slaves of Cupid! How could a woollen shawl make Glanville happier except by making him warmer? And yet it did, and not in that way alone.

It wanted little of midnight when they came to the front terrace of Trelingham Court. Andres rang the bell, saw Glanville safely down from his high seat, demanded the shawl by a respectful but not to be resisted gesture, and without waiting for fee or reward drove away in the dark. Lord Trelingham and the rest of the family were in the drawing-room, to which Rupert accordingly proceeded. There was some little commotion, followed by anxious questionings, on his appearance. The Earl had been alarmed and at a loss what to do, for no one could tell him in which direction his guest had walked out. Ivor Mardol, who had not gone to the Hermitage that day, was waiting for him, uncertain whether he should renew the efforts he had made a couple of hours previously to find him in the thick darkness. He had been searching on the Yalden side of the Park. But, of course, his search had been in vain. To Lady May the date marked out for something notable had seemed to be ending in calamity; she thought Rupert might have been drowned, waylaid, murdered, she could not tell what. Her joy on seeing him

was proportionate; but she dared not trust her feelings, and spoke no more than she could help. Glanville, never used to giving a long account of himself, now briefly explained that he had not walked in the direction of Yalden, but had crossed the stream and lost his way on the moor. A lucky accident had taken him near Falside, where he had been given something to eat and enabled to reach Trelingham.

'Did you see Colonel Valence?' inquired the Earl, scanning his face eagerly.

'Colonel Valence was not at home,' replied Glanville.

'Who was, then?' asked Lady May.

The artist, with a great appearance of sleepy distraction, answered in two words, 'Miss Valence.'

'Oh, Miss Valence,' cried Lady May, glancing towards her father; 'then you will have a singular story to tell, I am sure.'

'I don't know,' said Rupert, feeling more and more sleepy; 'but whatever it is I will tell you to-morrow morning. Excuse me, Lady May,' he continued, 'the long drive and the dark have taken away the little sense I had. Will you allow me to bid you good-night? I am ready to fall down and sleep on the floor.'

They let him go. He looked as tired as he said. The Earl would have liked to ask him about Falside, which he had not seen, except in the distance, for several years. And Lady May, on retiring to rest towards one o'clock, had only one thought in her mind, but it kept her awake for hours. He had seen Miss Valence; what was she like? Was she the sort of person to captivate Rupert, who was surely of a susceptible temperament, yet seemed on his guard against the approach of love? She could not be certain that he cared for herself in any passionate way. Would he care at all, would he care more for Miss Valence? An anxious problem.

Rupert fell fast asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow; and during the next eight hours paid equal attention, that is to say none at all, to Hippolyta and Lady May.

And Hippolyta? It would be interesting to know her

thoughts after that passionate pilgrim had vanished into the dark. Could Rupert's undisguised admiration have kindled in her an answering gleam? Who knows? For, after one brief interview, the heroine in Shakespeare found herself inquiring, 'Even so quickly may one catch the plague?' Certain it is that Hippolyta, before going to her room, sat down to read once again the concluding scenes of the *Antigone*. 'Yes,' she said to herself with decision as she came to the end, 'I was right. It is the Gospel of Woman!'

PART II

A MOCK SUN

CHAPTER XV

THE MEETING OF FAIR LADIES

It was natural that Lord Trelingham should ask next morning how Rupert had been led to Falside. And just as natural was it that Rupert should not know where to begin. He would not mention his first encounter with Hippolyta, and was thereby at a loss how to explain the second. He kept, therefore, to the vague and the general. He had never crossed the stream before, and, on the completion of his picture, had been seized with an irresistible desire to spend a morning in the open air and to explore the country which lay across the high and woody banks of Yale. He was not, like his friend Ivor, endowed with a strong local memory, and the mist which came down on the moor obliterated the usual landmarks. While in this uncertainty, Miss Valence, who was riding home, as he supposed, and who might have gathered from his appearance that he was a stranger, came to his rescue. She told him that he could not reach Trelingham before nightfall, and very kindly offered him shelter and refreshment at her father's house. He might have hesitated had Colonel Valence been at home; but in his absence no subjects were likely to be handled in which a guest at

Trelingham could not join, and he had accepted Miss Valence's benevolent offer. At this point Lady May interrupted him. 'Was Miss Valence riding unattended?' So far as he knew, she was.

'She must be an extraordinary young lady,' said the Earl's daughter. 'It is now four or five years since they came to Falside. Miss Valence has no mother, and apparently never had a governess. She has no companion, and but one woman-servant is ever seen about the place. But Miss Valence rides and walks alone where she pleases,—like a man or an American young woman. I have seen her only at a distance. Is she peculiar when you meet her?'

Glanville hardly knew; no, he thought not; he had no opinion, except that Miss Valence seemed to have had more experience of the world than he could have supposed. And here he began to consider how he should give her message to Lady May. Better now than when they were alone. He must speak as not having received any special confidences while at Falside.

'Miss Valence,' he said, not without an inward thrill as he mentioned her name, 'surprised me in some ways. I did not know at first whether she shared the Colonel's feelings. But it is evident that she does not. Her father, no doubt, sees that she can have nothing to do with his first marriage. At all events,' he went on, directing his words to the Earl, 'she spoke of you, I may say, with affection. Nor is that all. She expressed a strong desire to know Lady May.'

'Did she really?' cried the Countess, who had been listening attentively. 'How amusing it would be to know such an original girl! Do let us call on her, May.'

Her cousin was astonished, not at Karina, who uttered whatever came into her flighty brain, but at the message conveyed by Rupert. She was not prejudiced in favour of Miss Valence. Though her own views were unconventional and her principles daringly unlike those in which, as the daughter of a pious English peer, she had been trained, it did not follow that she approved of 'American manners,' as she called them. Neighbours who remembered Lady Alice's marriage, were slow to

mention the Valences when one of the Trelingham family happened to be present. Yet she had heard and seen enough to give her a disagreeable notion of Hippolyta as a bold, hoydenish sort of young person, brought up nobody knew where, and showing in her conduct a complete indifference to the sacred usages of the class to which her father at least belonged. Lady May was capable of breaking with society to gratify a strong inclination; but she was not capable of riding out without a groom. Those laws of the Medes and Persians which, concerned with slight outward forms, are different in different countries, are yet in each inviolable. Now Hippolyta had never borne their yoke. She could not feel the enormity of the offences she almost daily committed against those which govern Englishwomen. Not a stain could be imputed to her; in word and deed she was white as the driven snow. And yet the mention of her name in any drawing-room within a circuit of a dozen miles was accompanied, on the part of her own sex, with mysterious looks and frowns, which implied that her reputation was a thing of naught. On first coming into the country she was too young to be introduced anywhere; nor did Colonel Valence, who never entered a drawing-room, seek female society for his daughter. She had grown up alone, and seemed not to mind it. But such an eccentric way of life made it impossible that the ladies around should make acquaintance with her now she had reached the age of nineteen. She was excommunicated by universal though tacit consent. She was a social outcast, to be owned by no class of her father's fellow-citizens or their wives. Did she feel it? Was she aware of it even? Impossible to say. If she suffered, neither Colonel Valence nor any of their foreign guests observed her suffering. She went to and fro, or stayed at home and received her visitors, with much the same freedom and straightforwardness which a young man of her own age would have displayed. Her manners were, in this respect, American. Most certainly they were un-English. Had one of the younger revolutionists that sometimes came happened to interest her in his views, she would have written long letters to him and permitted or enjoined him

to answer at equal length, nor imagined that she was indulging an unfeminine intimacy. Assuredly she had not the shadow of a notion that such correspondence implied a promise or prospect of their union for life. As a matter of fact, she had no correspondent except her father; but she might have had a score and Colonel Valence would not have interposed. She did, indeed, write letters at his dictation to all parts of Europe, sometimes in cypher, and often without remembering their contents. These things were not all within Lady May's knowledge, but some of them were; and she could not decide whether the message conveyed by Rupert was a fresh instance of Miss Valence's boldness, or whether she ought to accept it in a friendly spirit. Her first resolution was in the negative. She could not take notice of Hippolyta; it would be every way unbecoming. 'Did you dine at Falside?' she inquired of Rupert. He admitted that he had done so; and further civil questioning made it clear that Miss Valence had presided at the dinner-table. This was dreadful in a maiden of nineteen; how could any lady that respected herself visit such a hardened sinner, such an inexcusable culprit? So reasoned the Earl's daughter on hearing these confessions, although for the honour of her sex she made no remark. Rupert, likewise, came in for his share of censure. But he was only a man, and men are easily led from the right path when women are bold. Call on Miss Valence? no, indeed. But the Countess would not leave her in peace. When she expressed her decision in a brief but energetic sentence, that lady, appealing to the Earl, who tolerated her saucy ways with marvellous good-nature, said, 'Don't you think, uncle, that it is very nice of poor Miss Valence to want May for a friend? She must be a great deal better than her father. I don't like his looks at all. But Miss Valence seems very bright and charming; it is not her fault if nobody calls at such an ogre's castle as Falside. I daresay she does not know what people think. Although,' continued the Countess in a wise tone, 'what people think is often as silly as can be. I know I wish there were not always a servant behind one to spoil things. If I were Miss Valence I should enjoy riding about where

I pleased, and doing what I liked.' She spoke with conviction, the lawless creature!

The beginning of this little speech was more persuasive than the end. Lord Trelingham smiled at the first words, and did not attend to the last.

'I incline to think,' he said, with a benignant glance at his daughter, 'that your cousin is not altogether wrong. It might be a kindness to Miss Valence, alone and unfriended as she seems to be, if you made her acquaintance. You could help her to understand what is expected of a young lady in her position, and perhaps put an end to the isolation in which she lives. What do you say, my dear?'

Lady May was still reflecting on the odd circumstance that Rupert should have dined at Falside. She did not answer immediately. Her affection for the artist had not yet been quickened by jealousy. But she disliked the thought of Hippolyta intervening at that moment. Why could fortune not have waited till Rupert had taken the decisive step? It was a most undesirable incident. If she declined to call on Miss Valence, she must remain in the dark about her so long as Rupert hesitated. There might, of course, be no feelings on either side; but still—— She must gain time to think. 'Would not Colonel Valence make a difficulty?' she inquired by way of answering her father.

'No difficulty to me,' said the Earl. 'I have long resolved that if he or his came with overtures of reconciliation I would meet them half way. There are reasons why I could do no other. Lady Alice's fortune is still in my trust. If she left no children, it should go to her husband.'

Rupert, who had reasons on his side to encourage the intimacy, threw in a word. 'I believe Colonel Valence leaves his daughter free to choose her friends. She said expressly that he would not be displeased at her sending the message I have had the honour to convey.'

'That is strange,' said the Earl. 'I should be glad to think it implied kindlier feelings on his part. But since he said so, you may be sure he meant it. Valence always knew his own mind.'

Nothing more was said just then. A few days passed; and Rupert, still in a dream which was so vivid and absorbing

that he hardly wanted to see Hippolyta, went silently to and fro in the Park or spent hours by the sea, his imagination busy on the designs which must be prepared for the Great Hall, his heart musing on its own happiness and inspiring his genius with ever fresh lights. He said little or nothing; but the watchful eye of his hostess caught him smiling often, fantastically, like Malvolio, whom, as I have remarked, most infatuated lovers resemble in their gestures. The change, unobserved by others, could not escape Lady May; but the meaning of it was beyond her. Rupert never uttered Miss Valence's name. Now that the *tête-à-tête* in the picture-gallery had come to an end, these two seldom saw one another alone, and at no time for more than a few seconds. While others were present Rupert stayed; when they went he found a pretext for leaving the room. All this he did unconsciously, not being quite awake. The question whether he had done Lady May a wrong was one that, after the drive from Falside, ceased to trouble him. The truth is that he scarcely thought of her at all. Years of absence could not have made a wider gulf between them than the hours he had passed with Hippolyta, or in thinking about her since their meeting. He looked neither before nor after. He did not even reflect on the difficulties which might arise should Lady May call on Hippolyta and the innocent Amazon give an account of her visit to the Hermitage. She was capable of it; but Rupert never heeded.

Fortune favoured him, more perhaps than he deserved. The next time he rowed to the chalet Ivor was at home. Our philosopher had fallen into a habit of spending almost every day by himself, and appeared at Trelingham merely for dinner, being occupied, as he said, in the work which Rupert had given him. Imagine the consternation of the latter when his friend said to him, 'By the bye, an extraordinary thing happened here not long ago.'

'What sort of thing?' said Rupert, looking up from the couch where he lounged away his time on these visits. He was alarmed and nervous at what might be coming.

'Well, I should call it a ghostly visitation,' replied Ivor. 'Do you remember that afternoon you wandered across the moor and got to Falside?'

'Of course I do,' said Rupert impatiently; 'but do go on. That has nothing to do with your story, has it?'

'Nothing; only it fixes the date. I did not return to the Hermitage that evening, as it was midnight when you came home and the notion of walking through the mist was anything but agreeable. I slept in my old room, next to yours. Some little matters kept me till the afternoon; but I had made up my mind to come back, if only for a short spell, as I had been a whole forty-eight hours in the society of human creatures. So I rowed over about three o'clock. The result was a series of surprises. First, and most extraordinary of all, I found the coracle from the other side lying at the steps.'

'Do you mean,' said Rupert, who felt he must make an effort, 'that you found it in the boathouse on the Trelingham side?'

'No;' here at the steps, I tell you. It was most extraordinary. It could not have moored itself; and I ran into the house, expecting to see a visitor, little as I knew who it could be. There was no visitor, although I looked everywhere. If any one came in the coracle he must have flown away again, using wings instead of oars, for there was the boat, and there was not he.'

'A ghost, surely,' cried the other young man, laughing a forced laugh. He remembered his stupidity, and anathematised himself for leaving the coracle behind.

'But was that all?' resumed he, after his laugh was out. 'You talked of surprises.'

'I did,' said Ivor. 'Look at this;' and to Rupert's horror and delight he held up a riding-glove which must have been Hippolyta's. 'I found it on the chair by the door.'

'Let me see it,' said the arch-hypocrite. He took it in his hand. Ah, how much greater was the mesmeric influence of this poor dead thing than of all the lightnings that shot from the eyes of Lady May! 'Go on,' he murmured dreamily.

'Go on,' echoed Ivor; 'that is all very fine, my dear boy. But what am I to think of finding a glove here?'

'That it was lost by an angel,' said Rupert, still in a trance.

'I don't think it can have been an angel,' answered his friend laughingly; 'at all events, it was not an angel out of the Christian heaven, for it brought me a message from quite another quarter.'

'Brought you a message? Never!' cried Glanville, now thoroughly awake and starting to his feet. Could Hippolyta be in communication with his friend? Impossible!

'But it did, all the same; and that is why my time has been so taken up. I must leave Trelingham in a few days.'

'You don't mean that this glove,' Rupert held it tighter as he spoke, 'has to do with your leaving Trelingham.'

'No; but this piece of paper has.' Ivor, from the table where he was sitting, took up a folded half-sheet of note-paper and held it out. Glanville scanned it eagerly, but could make nothing of it. He turned it upside down with no better result. 'Is it Russian?' he said, 'or what? I never saw letters formed like these, if letters they are.'

'It is a cypher,' replied Mardol, 'and tells me I must go to London on business.' He looked serious and somewhat downcast.

'I can guess the sort of business,' said the artist; 'but of course I will not ask you about it. Poor Ivor! are you still convinced that you are in the right way?'

'Utterly convinced,' replied he; 'nor is it that which troubles me. But I do not like to leave you so suddenly and with such little prospect of returning.'

'Shall you be absent long?' inquired his friend, feeling sad and yet relieved at the turn things were taking. If it was this errand which brought Hippolyta to the chalet she would not mention it to Lady May.

'I do not know how long. But I daresay several months. You will have to do without me in the Great Hall.'

'And if I want you?' asked his friend. 'You know how miserable I am when you vanish out of sight in this fashion.'

'Write to Grafton Place. One of my working friends will forward my letters.'

'It seems to me,' said Rupert, somewhat bitterly, 'that you trust your working friend more than you do this brother of yours. Why not give me an address where my letters could at once reach you?'

'Rupert, how can you say so?' cried the other, coming up to him and putting his hand on his shoulder. 'You know that in comparison with you I have no friend. This is a matter of duty or discipline, not of affection. I do not belong to myself. When I am summoned I must go. I shall have no fixed address; in any case I am bound to secrecy.'

'Well, old fellow, I wish you well out of it,' said his friend. 'You ought to belong to yourself; and as for the secrecy which you have promised, it can bode little good to any one. But you must do what you think right.'

'Yes,' replied Ivor, 'I partly agree with you. But I have promised and there's an end on't. What excites my curiosity, however, is the way in which this notice came. I saw, on entering, that my books were not in their usual places, and on looking round I discovered a volume of poetry on the table with this paper showing out of it. Had I not been so hasty in coming in, I might have known there was a message by the marks on the front-door. You look surprised. But they are rubbed out now, and I don't mind telling you that we find it useful to adopt such signals—borrowed, I suppose, from the gipsies. But still, I cannot account for the messenger's getting away.'

'Perhaps he had two boats,' said Rupert, 'and left the coracle to draw your attention.' He could not help laughing as he spoke at the thought of trying to mislead Ivor. The fatal effects of love! He was aware that the relations between Colonel Valence and Lord Trelingham had never been discussed before his friend. Ivor did not know the story of the Madonna of San Lucar except in general outline, nor until the adventure on the moor had Miss Valence been mentioned. Thus if the young man departed immediately he might never know who had left the missive on his table. Rupert felt certain it was Hippolyta. Her bold visit was now explained; and the circumstance that she had held a book in her hand when she received him so calmly was decisive. He would have liked to ask whether his friend knew the Valences or anything about them. But it was part of their silent compact never to indulge in personal questions which might involve deceit

on Ivor's part. Rupert was in the dark, not as to his friend's convictions, but as to the extent to which they implicated him in dangerous designs. That Ivor would not countenance assassination he felt sure. But there his knowledge ended. So now he did not dare to mention Colonel Valence or his daughter. But Ivor was speaking.

'Bring two boats and leave one; that is an original idea,' he exclaimed; 'it would not be unlike the strange being from whom this comes.'

'Then you know the writing?' said Glanville.

'I know it,' replied the other quietly; 'but I do not know the glove, which ought to be destroyed.' He put forth his unmerciful hand while speaking, and, to Rupert's poignant grief, took the beloved object away. To protest would have been in vain. With sorrowful eyes the worshipper of Hippolyta beheld her divine glove (is it not so the poets call it?) weighted with a stone and flung into the mere. A ripple on the waters showed where it had gone down, and for half a minute Rupert detested his bosom-friend. But, wise even in despair, he held his peace; and the adored name of Hippolyta escaped not the hedge of his teeth. Ivor, as though he had accomplished a sacred duty, turned the conversation to other things; and his friend when he grew calm believed that the peril on that side was past.

How did it stand on the other, which was Lady May's? When in the evening he returned to Trelingham one of the first to greet him was the Countess Lutenieff, and she did so in the triumphant words, 'We have called on Miss Valence.' The young man's heart beat fast. He thought it was the Countess's doing, and he did not know whether to feel grateful or the reverse. He wished the acquaintance had begun under better auspices. But he was mistaken. Not Karina, but Lady May had proposed to drive over in the afternoon to Falside. This was the outcome of her painful meditations. She would see with her own eyes and hear with her own ears. To linger in suspense was intolerable; it was, indeed, killing her, as she said with the exaggerated language of passion for which, in this instance, ground was not wholly wanting. Once having

resolved on the visit, she was restless till it had taken place. To her fevered spirit even the hours occupied in driving to Falside seemed an age. It was a delightfully still afternoon, with that serious unruffled calm over earth and sea which has the solemnity though not the bitterness of a farewell to things mortal. The trees were bare, the long lanes dry and leafless, the country silent as they drove through it. Lady May, addressing no word to her cousin, sat upright in her furs and looked eagerly onward, as though to quicken the pace at which they were moving. She would have given much to be tranquil, but it was not in her nature; and when the carriage turned at the steep entrance to Falside, she almost wished that she had never undertaken this trying visit. Could any good come of it? But self-control was too much a habit of her life to be shaken even by a meeting with the woman on whose attractiveness or the want of it her future perhaps depended; and only the sharpened attention of Karina could perceive that in shaking hands with Hippolyta she was inwardly agitated.

The supreme powers, indeed, had so ordered it that their first encounter was agreeable. Lady May acquitted herself of a delicate task with grace and courtesy, while the quiet spirit of the afternoon seemed to have passed into Hippolyta. Unaffectedly surprised and pleased with Lady May's kindness, she was not so much the spirited maiden who feared neither to ride alone nor to preside at the dinner-table when her father gathered round it his miscellaneous guests, as the child who is all shyness and gratitude in return for a token of love. With charming simplicity she did the honours of Falside; and while not apologising for anything in their way of life, she spoke as if taking for granted the peculiarities in her bringing-up and in Colonel Valence's history, which would explain whatever might seem strange. There was not a turn in her speech nor a trace in her bearing that could be deemed unfeminine. The Countess was particularly struck with her; she was so elegantly dressed and looked so beautiful in the shades of colour she had chosen that all idea of a female revolutionist vanished from Karina's mind. If she

was learned, she kept it to herself; if unbelieving, as people said, she was certainly not aggressive. Her natural delight on receiving them gained her visitors in no long time, so that a stranger coming in might have taken them for old-established callers.

And, pray, what did they talk about? You may well ask, for it was a curiously intimate yet strictly defined conversation. Subjects there were in the minds of all three which, though constantly suggesting themselves, could not be handled. Lady May found it wisest, as it was most natural, to begin with the occurrence that had given occasion to their meeting—Rupert's adventure on the moor. Had the gentleman himself been in company he would have praised Hippolyta's discretion—it was equal to her other adorable virtues. For when, by the tenor of Lady May's discourse, it was evident that he had said nothing at Trelingham of their meeting in the morning, she fell in with Rupert's policy and said as little. This was not because Miss Valence deemed her conduct unmaidenly; the thought never entered her mind. But if Rupert had not spoken, there was no reason why she should speak. She allowed the story to begin where he told it; and keenly as her visitors examined her countenance while she inquired about him, neither the Countess nor Lady May perceived a change in its exquisite calm or noted in her voice the tremulousness that is born of love. The Earl's daughter began to feel happier; and her cousin, in whose fertile mind a certain plan had been ripening, had to brush away a sense of disappointment when it appeared that Rupert Glanville excited no more interest at Falside than a young man may to whom one has given shelter from the rain. Hippolyta knew nothing of his pictures, and could ask about them in a steady voice. Then she passed to a more important topic,—her own isolation, necessitated, in great measure, by the wandering life of Colonel Valence and the principles on which he regulated his household. It was impossible, she said with a smile, to receive friends who could not forego the convenience of servants, or who would be shocked by seeing their hostess performing what they might deem menial offices. Nor did she complain of her

exclusion from the world. She was not without interests; she had travelled with her parents in many parts of Europe; and she had books and a horse. All she wanted besides—she hesitated, and looked in a pleading, affectionate way from one lady to the other—was a friend or two of her own sex, who might remind her that there were other things as sweet and precious as the service in which she was engaged. Especially, she went on, it had been her desire to know a little of Lady May, to be allowed sometimes to talk with her, and, sooner or later, to help towards healing the feud which had lasted so many years. It was daring, on her part, to make the request which Rupert had conveyed. 'But,' she said, 'you would not blame a poor sailor who was cast away on a desert island for putting up his torn handkerchief as a signal to any ship that came in sight. I had no other way.'

All this was said with extreme modesty and a charm of manner which Lady May had been far from anticipating. Hippolyta's strange beauty dazzled her; while the combination of self-respect with straightforward feeling which appeared in all she spoke, made it impossible to set her down as the unwomanly creature she was deemed in the neighbourhood. She asked for affection. Could it be refused? But while Lady May was reasoning, the Countess had decided. With her birdlike lightness she had flown to Hippolyta, and, kissing her on the cheek, cried out, 'My dear, you are perfectly charming. You may reckon upon us as your friends as long as we live. What a pity we did not begin earlier; but we must make up for lost time, and consider that we have been friends these five years.' Hippolyta returned her embrace, saying in a low, earnest voice, 'How kind this is of you!' But she still kept her eyes on Lady May, as though the Countess's affection by itself would not suffice. The Earl's daughter had gone too far to draw back. Neither was she disposed to feel uneasy, as before their meeting. She put out her hand and took Hippolyta's with a firm grasp, while she said, 'My dear Miss Valence, I am not much given to making promises, and the Countess knows that I have but few intimate friends. But you may always reckon upon

me; and I will do my best to bring about the reconciliation you have at heart. Will you come one of these days and see my father? He will be so glad to see you.'

'Oh,' said Hippolyta, 'these are words to make one happy. I have so wished to speak with Lord Trelingham. I will come whenever you please; and you may be sure that in doing so I have my father's consent. I did not press him at all. He gave it of his own accord.'

On this understanding they parted. Hippolyta promised that she would come to Trelingham for a long day, as soon as her household affairs permitted; and Lady May renewed her assurances that she should be received by the Earl with cordiality. At the gate, to which she accompanied them, Hippolyta underwent a second embrace from Madame de Lutenieff, and again shook hands with the less demonstrative of her visitors. She saw them off, and walked back with thoughtful steps and slow along the terrace, listening to her waterfall as it leapt merrily down the rocks. Much had been done, but much remained to do. Her purpose in soliciting Lady May's friendship was indeed simply to end the long disagreement between the families. She could not comprehend her father's motive in keeping it up, unless that he fancied the Earl unwilling to be reconciled. But the Earl had relented, according to Lady May; and why should Colonel Valence not do the same? Their political differences were not to the point; they never had met, nor were likely to meet, on this ground. For if Lord Trelingham was a Tory of the purest type, her father represented a programme which at that date no English party would have dreamt of adopting. He despised the politics of the polling-booth, and would have begun his reform by abolishing not only the Crown, but the Houses of Parliament with it. She knew that the two men could never again be friends; why, however, should they continue to be enemies? The waters kept falling with their pleasant ripple, and Hippolyta roamed about her garden till sun down.

CHAPTER XVI

LA BELLE FILLE HEUREUSE, EFFARÉE ET SAUVAGE

SUCH was the event of which Rupert heard from the Countess when he came in; and at dinner she dressed it up in the grotesque fancies suggested by her imagination. She had never seen any one like Hippolyta. She compared her, as the artist himself had done, to a sylph, a creature of romance, imprisoned by Colonel Valence at Falside. They ought not to rest till she was delivered. Glanville laughingly inquired whether a captive sylph was in the habit of riding alone all over the country; and was told in reply that Hippolyta's captivity was moral, not a mere imprisonment of the body. She dressed with remarkable taste for one who had never seen a fashionable gathering; but that might be inspiration like Rachel's, who could have worn a tablecloth as if it were a princess's robe. And her manners, though wild, were beautiful. Therefore she must come out and be made known to civilised people. The Countess would do her that charity if no one else was willing, for she adored Hippolyta.

'Do you think her a sylph, Lady May?' asked Glanville.

'She seems to me a young lady of most unusual loveliness, and of great intelligence and decision. But I should not call her a sylph, because I don't know what the word means. It is one of those sentimental expressions that my cousin has learnt from her French reading.'

'You are always severe on my reading,' said Karina; 'but we cannot all be philosophers. A sylph is a beautiful creature with great dreamy eyes, and wings folded up in her

corset, so that she has only to spread them and she can fly wherever she chooses. Don't you believe that Miss Valence could fly if she liked?'

'She has character enough to do anything,' said Lady May, 'and I am glad to have made her acquaintance. But we shall know more when she comes to Trelingham.'

It was evident that she had not spoken of the Hermitage. Oh, wise Hippolyta, thought Rupert. Now he should see her again; and the secret between them would give him an advantage. All love-making is a contest in which not a little depends on the given odds. Hippolyta was to some extent in his power. And he was no longer in hers—since she had kept silence when to speak might have put him in the wrong.

He watched every day till she came. A whole week moved on at the laggard pace of time when we are expecting something to happen. Ivor finished his work, or at least put it in order for Rupert to finish; packed up his belongings, and said good-bye to the Earl and Lady May with a tranquil mien in which none could have discerned the passionate regrets that filled his heart. Lord Trelingham begged him to come back as soon as he could; the Hermitage would be always at his disposal, and he might rest assured of a hearty welcome. He smiled sadly; no, he thanked them, it was most improbable that he should return. Circumstances, his way of life, imperative engagements, forbade the hope. But he would call on them in town? He did not know; the future was so uncertain. Then Tom Davenant said he must come to Foxholme; and poor Ivor turned away his face because of the shame and emotion that were gathering there. If Tom could only know upon what errand he was departing, the last thing he would have imagined would have been such an invitation. He loved the young man. But they stood ranged on opposite sides in the battle of life; and the trumpet-call which was sounding in his own ears sternly told him that friendship must yield to duty. 'I will come indeed, if I can,' he answered, 'but though I never should, believe that the fault is not mine. We are all creatures of circumstance.' Tom had, therefore, to content himself

with the mournful pleasure of driving him to the station, which he did with exemplary skill, at the same time assuring Ivor that if he would not mind little deficiencies in writing and grammar—his ignorance of which the young man regretted, though too late—he, Tom Davenant, should find solace in corresponding with him. His friend smiled and said how grateful it would make him, adding that, in case he delayed an answer for some weeks, it would mean that he was gone from home. Characteristic of the man I call it, that his sorrow on leaving these two friends, Rupert and Tom Davenant, almost made him forget the love he was renouncing. Nay, he thought more of the new friend than of the old during those days; for he expected to meet Rupert again in London or abroad, but this might prove his last farewell to Tom Davenant. He had lived more than four months at the chalet. It was now November; and the winter of his discontent took from him, or made more piercing, the remembrance of those heavenly days when first he came. Happy if he could forget them altogether! But no, they would be a lifelong regret. Even as the thought crossed his mind he smiled bitterly. Lifelong might not be so very long after all. He was ordered to the front; and those who are to face cannon do not insure their lives at a low premium. He would not disclose to the friend by his side, or even to Rupert, how serious the danger had become; I should rather say, he could not, for they would have hindered his going. But a certain steady light in his eyes and involuntary tension of the muscles betokened the excitement under which he laboured. 'You are not very well,' said Tom to him; 'can't you wait a few days?' Rupert noticed his mood, was exceedingly gentle with him as on the like occasions in their previous intercourse; but ventured neither to ask a question nor to offer advice. He knew well that Ivor did not brook interference.

So he went away and disappeared into the unknown. Rupert, a few days after, requested that the chalet might be assigned to himself as a studio and general storehouse, for he did not wish to encumber the Great Hall as yet, and his sketches took up room. But he never went across

the mere till he had ascertained that Hippolyta would not call in the morning. He was now assiduous in his politeness to Lady May, upon whose spirits a dull tranquillity had fallen, like yellow fog stifling and blinding her. She could not subdue the fascination of being with him; ever when he came into the room the others vanished from her eyes and she looked at him alone, and brooded over his slightest utterances. She did not fear Hippolyta much now; and not to be jealous was comparative happiness. There had come indeed an end of her confidences and of his listening to them. But when would he declare himself? For he was surely bound by what had passed.

It was a lovely morning when Hippolyta appeared at Trelingham, in a low chaise which she drove herself, while the silent old groom or gardener sat behind. She had come to spend the day, but not to dine; for she said in her note that they must excuse her shyness if she felt tempted to fly away again as soon as she found herself inside the Court. Glanville, who had been lingering since breakfast about the gate by which she was to enter and saw her drive by, himself lying close in ambush, ran along other pathways up to the house, and the moment he decently could sauntered into the morning-room where the three ladies were seated. That he blushed like a very young man on meeting those brown eyes need hardly be said; and if Hippolyta's countenance did not put on exactly the same shade of crimson, it may have been simply because hers was a pale ivory cheek and his was rather swarthy. They were both a good deal embarrassed, which Lady May ascribed to the circumstances of the adventure which had made them acquainted. She said to herself that Miss Valence, though she had sinned against propriety on that day, had done so ignorantly, while Rupert was often confused on coming into a room. They talked until the Earl came about the scenery of Trelingham Park, which Hippolyta did not know except on the outskirts. And the artist sat and gazed at her. She was more beautiful than ever. Lady May, whom he could now contrast with his divinity, seemed a majestic woman, allied to the dangerous creatures of forest or jungle in whose composition there is more

fire than light. But Hippolyta did not belong to earth. Fervent she might be in her feelings, quick to speak and to move; her beauty was not childlike, nor did it appeal merely to the softer passions of pity and tenderness; but there was about her, all the while, an innocent directness, a virginal simplicity, which made of her 'a thing enskied and sainted.' When she answered Lady May her voice had in it a tone of great affection, which changed to something bright and sparkling if the Countess addressed her. But it was clear that she listened, even while joining in the conversation, for a step that happily was not long delayed. Every minute she had looked towards the door in anxious expectation; and when it opened and the Earl of Trelingham came in, walking with the feeble gait which was growing habitual with him, she rose at once and ran to meet the old man. He took both her hands in his, and, clasping them affectionately, led her towards the window. There was little need to say that he welcomed her; his emotion proved it better than words. After scanning her face eagerly in silence, he let go her hands, and said, 'You do not remind me of your father, my dear child. But so many years have elapsed since I knew his features well, that I may perhaps be mistaken. It is equally brave and kind of you to pay me this visit. My daughter has told you, I am sure, how glad we are to see you and what a hope we have that this may be the beginning of better things.'

'I know,' answered Hippolyta, 'and I wish I could help more in the matter than, I fear, is within my power. Of one thing pray let me assure you, for I am certain of it,' and she stopped as if for permission.

'Go on, my dear,' said the Earl; 'do not be afraid if you have anything to say.' He too seemed overcome by her great beauty and simple ways.

'What I want to tell you,' she said, 'is that my father has often spoken your name of late years, and never without affection. I cannot imagine why he has kept, and still keeps, aloof from his old friends; but there is no ill-feeling in it, of that I am convinced.'

'Thank God,' said the Earl, 'thank God! It is all I

want,—to forget the past, which cannot be undone, and die in peace with all men. As regards your father, I did for a long while allow a feeling of resentment to come between him and me. It may have seemed unjust in his eyes that any one should have contested his rights as a father over the issue of his first marriage. But I went by the advice of others and my own conscience. However, my poor sister is dead, and you are Colonel Valence's only child, and it is time the past was buried.'

'My father has hardly ever mentioned Lady Alice in my hearing,' replied Hippolyta. 'It was almost by accident that I knew of his former marriage, and for months after coming to Falside I was ignorant that we lived near her family. My mother told me when she was very ill. I am like my mother. She was Spanish, and could not bear the English climate, although she did her best not to let my father see the harm it was doing her.'

'Was your mother Spanish?' inquired the Earl. 'Then, perhaps, she brought you up in her religious views.' Rupert waited with some curiosity for the answer.

'My mother did not bring me up at all,' said Hippolyta; 'she was an invalid most of her time. My father taught me all I know.' She spoke with composure, and seemed to have said all that she thought necessary. Lord Trelingham was too well bred to pursue the examination. His melancholy looks, indeed, bore witness to what he feared would have been the result. He blamed Colonel Valence, but it was impossible to blame his daughter; and the sad spiritual condition of so lovely and innocent a creature filled him with indignation, which went far to counteract his previous desire to condone the past. Meanwhile, Karina, whose eager spirits made her sometimes inconsiderate, inquired of Hippolyta, 'Do you never go to church then? I don't think your father does, at least in the country.'

Lord Trelingham, with some severity in his tone, interposed. 'My dear Karina,' he said, 'you must really not cross-examine Miss Valence. These are matters of conscience, about which we have no right to be curious.'

But Miss Valence was not offended. She replied at once to the Countess. 'I have been in some of the great

churches abroad, when there was no service going on. But otherwise I do not know what is done in a church. My father did not teach me religion.'

This remarkable declaration, made in her natural voice, which was gentle and sweet, came upon her hearers like lightning from a clear sky. It startled them, although every one present had supposed it already. But there are so many things we know yet could not venture on putting into words. The Earl was inexpressibly pained; Lady May looked across at Glanville to see what effect this confession would have on him; and the Countess felt frightened, as though a snake had turned under her hand and bitten her. Rupert moved uncomfortably in his chair. It was a shock to him, certainly. He would have said, in the abstract, that with these matters women had nothing to do; they ought to keep to the religion in which they were born and leave speculation to the philosophers. But when his eyes fell on the beloved features again the discomfort vanished. Hippolyta sat, a picture of quiet beauty, untroubled by the momentary silence which had followed her declaration, and perhaps too little acquainted with the ways of the world to comprehend how much it had astonished them. She said 'My father did not teach me religion' as she would have said, had it been the fact, 'I was born blind.' She was not aggressive or defiant, but natural and innocent. Thus it came to pass that even Lord Trelingham's horror, which was exceedingly great, yielded to compassion, and he thought it more than ever expedient to make her at home among good Christians who might enlighten her.

But lest that terrible niece of his should ask more questions, he turned the conversation to Miss Valence's knowledge of the Continent, and they were soon deep in the comparative beauties of the Alps and the Apennines. Her parents, it was evident, had wandered fast and far, seldom staying long in one place, and never making the acquaintance of great families unless some member of them happened to be 'tainted with democratic opinions,' as Lord Trelingham would have called it, or, in Colonel Valence's phrase, 'enlightened and liberal.' There was

something even slightly ridiculous in the way that names came up between the Earl and the young lady. If he mentioned a noble house, she often knew it; but when he went on to describe the august head thereof or his equally august consort, Hippolyta had never seen either, and owed her familiarity with the name to a scapegrace or scientific young man, the grief of his parents, who had served with Garibaldi in Sicily, or was famous in the Cretan or the Polish rising. Lord Trelingham bore it very well; this he had expected; and much as he might deplore the associations in which Valence had brought up his daughter, there were too many great Englishmen on that side to allow of unmitigated censure in the instance before him. The Earl was by no means liberal, but he was something which is perhaps as commendable in a world where we cannot have all we should like,—he was good-natured, and quite incapable of identifying individuals with the doctrines they held. He therefore listened with patience and a degree of interest to the remarks, which were rather pointed than voluble, of Hippolyta on those revolutionary young men whose pedigree he knew in Lombardy and Languedoc. He was led to speak of his own travels, which had been extensive; but, interrupting himself suddenly in the midst of his recital, he asked whether Miss Valence had ever been in Spain. Yes, she told him, once, on the side of Barcelona. And Seville, did she know that picturesque city? She had not been there, nor had her father mentioned his early campaign in its neighbourhood. Then she knew nothing of the Madonna of San Lucar? Nothing whatever, she replied. He was astonished that so striking an incident of his first travels had not been a favourite theme of Colonel Valence's. However, it might help to soften him still more if he learned how narrowly the picture had escaped destruction. He would perhaps be touched on hearing it; for the sight of the portrait long ago had affected him powerfully and even brought him, one might say, from Spain to Trelingham.

Herewith the Earl invited Hippolyta to follow him to the gallery upstairs. She rose, nothing loth; and as he evidently wished the rest to accompany them, a general move was made. The Countess, again interposing as they

went along, asked Hippolyta whether she knew what kind of picture was about to be shown her. The young lady, turning half round on the stairs, answered that she supposed it would resemble those she had noticed in the great collections on the Continent. 'You must not imagine,' she added innocently, 'that I have not studied the Christian mythology. I cannot say, indeed, that I am familiar with all its details.' Glanville fell back a step on hearing this language, and Karina did not open her mouth again for some time. She was daring herself, but she knew that ordinary people did not speak in this way; and again the simile of the snake occurred to her. Lord Trelingham was either deaf or preoccupied, and took no heed of the remark. Perhaps he was thinking how he could make the history of the picture brief yet intelligible; for, when they arrived before it, he began at once to run over the main points as we know them. He said nothing of Valence's motives for leaving England, nor of what followed when he came back to Trelingham. But how much of his narrative did the stranger apprehend? She stood like one spellbound, first eyeing Lady May and then lost in the magnificence and glory of the painting. The Earl ceased to speak, and there was a long silence, during which Hippolyta steadfastly gazed at it, never turning her head, with the expression of one who would learn a thing by heart. By and by she glanced towards Lady May, and going up to her, said in a whisper, 'Is not that your portrait? And when did you live in that wonderful world?' The question was extraordinary, but Hippolyta seemed in earnest. Lady May smiled with a feeling of anguish; she still felt the distance between herself and that ideal of heavenly innocence.

'The picture was painted long ago,' she replied, 'from an ancestress of mine. I sat to Mr. Glanville when it was restored; that is all.'

'And so,' Hippolyta said, 'it is only a piece of imagination. But how beautiful it would be if we could believe that somewhere in the heights or the depths there was a perfect human creature, one of ourselves, a woman, like this! Do you suppose there can be?' she asked of Lady May.

'I do not know,' was the answer, given somewhat impetuously; 'the medieval Christians thought so, as the Spanish and Italian peasants do still.'

'Yes,' said Hippolyta; 'I used to hear them sing and speak of the Madonna, and I called it, as my father did, mythology. But I was never so impressed with a painting as I am with this. I should be glad if it were a true vision. And yet we all say it cannot be. The peasants have their beautiful things to believe in, and the philosophers have none. That is what I am always hearing at home. It makes me sad when I think of it. If the truth is not beautiful, what is the good of it all?' She looked round, expecting some one, as it should seem, to answer. But they were too much astonished at such curious words on the lips of one so young.

'Such questions are not fit for you,' said Glanville, coming close to her. 'If you had lived with other young ladies you would not think of them. I, at any rate, believe that all true things, in the long run, will be found beautiful as well.'

'Then you disagree with my father?' she said inquiringly.

'I disagree with all gloomy creeds,' he answered. 'But come away, and do not look at the picture again if it distresses you.' Lady May listened; she heard something in his voice of which she did not approve.

'Oh, it does not distress me; on the contrary,' exclaimed Hippolyta, 'it would keep me looking at it all day. And at last I should beg the wonderful figure to open its lips and speak. What grieves me is, that with colours and a piece of linen you can express so much beauty—at so little cost—and yet the resources of the infinite cannot make this real.'

The Earl put in his quiet word. 'If you wish, my dear child, to believe it real, there is nothing to prevent you. I believe it in my own way; so do the multitude of Christians, and not the peasantry alone. But come, as Mr. Glanville says, for you are too susceptible, I see, to sudden impressions.'

She left the picture unwillingly, and looked back more

than once as they went to the door. The incident had shown her in a strange and amiable light which endeared her to the heart of Lord Trelingham; while Rupert, mindful of his own enthusiasm when restoring the Madonna of the Seraphim, said to himself that this highly poetic temperament had at once seized its meaning and reality—a result which only days of study had brought about in him the sensitive artist. Hippolyta was peculiar; but where in heaven or earth could he find a more exquisite creation?

When, by and by, she spoke of returning to Falside, and the Earl was taking her to the pony-chaise which had been brought round, that kind-hearted old man said to her, 'It was a great grief to me that Lady Alice left no children; but, although you are not my niece in blood, I trust you will always look upon me as your sincere friend, and come to Trelingham often. Your father and I were boys together, and I can never forget him.'

CHAPTER XVII

EAVESDROPPING

THREE months passed quickly by, the happiest in Rupert's life. Winter by the Western Sea is often wild and stormy; the days have little light in them, and the moist vapour filling the air seems to cling heavily about one, while hour after hour the rain-clouds creep along the sides of the valleys or hang on the wooded ridges above them. It is a monotonous, dull-eyed season, the least favourable that can be imagined to inspiration; and only a brave spirit will bear up against it or keep alert under its stupifying influence. But the brave spirit was there. If light grew scant outside, and work went on slowly in the Great Hall, a radiance was kindling within the artist's fancy which became larger every day, adding an energy to his step, a charm to his voice and expression, and for the while utterly doing away with the melancholy that used to haunt him. When he was called to his London studio, as happened more than once, he went regretfully, stayed the shortest possible time, and ran back again like a boy escaping from school over the palings. He came to be looked upon almost as a member of the Trelingham household; and, in turn, he seemed to love everything in and about it. His unequal humour gave place to a cheerfulness which was willing to amuse and to be amused. Nothing could ruffle him; and Lady May, in spite of herself, caught the infection of his high spirits, while Tom Davenant declared that if all artists resembled Glanville they were not half-bad fellows. The Earl, though no judge of character, became ever more thankful that Providence, through his

daughter's suggestion, had put him in the way of a great painter and most agreeable companion, who knew how to observe the delicate line of conduct traced out for him by circumstances. Rupert's behaviour was, I must say, perfect; he kept his distance, did not ask or encourage sentimental conversations on the part of Lady May, and displayed towards her and the Countess a courtesy in which it would have been impossible to strike a shade of difference. If he had in any way presumed, here to a reasonable mind was satisfaction.

The secret of his content lay near at hand. For the first time in his life he was in love. He saw Hippolyta when she visited Trelingham; he met her by chance as she rode out, and watched her footsteps along the sands where, on bright afternoons, she sometimes walked. He professed an ardent desire to know the tracks over the moor which lay on the other side of Yale; and his explorations naturally took him up the course of the stream, if only to admire in its winter glory the cascade from which Falside derived its name. At this time of the year he found it more romantic, and the flood of waters more plenteous, than he had expected. It was, indeed, not the season for out-door sketching; yet an hour of fine weather would come occasionally, and he transferred to his portfolio a number of rapid and, it must be allowed, masterly views in which the waterfall dashed and foamed over its moss-grown rocks, and the bare trees bending over it added grandeur to the scene. Hippolyta's garden, lying on the hillside and green as an Alpine meadow, could not well be omitted; nor a gable of the cottage, although it stood back from the cascade, and was visible only at one point of sight. The young lady was not always at home when these sketches were taken; but Rupert, who, like all artists, had something of the gipsy in him, would go up at the back of the cottage and humbly demand from old Dolores, the nurse or housekeeper, a glass of milk to quench his thirst. Dolores saw him about the place, and did not mind; while his petition, delivered in a matter-of-fact tone and without hesitating, seemed to imply that it was customary. She gave the milk and said nothing about it to her mistress.

But as he happened once to be standing at the door in his vagrant attitude, taking slow draughts of that beverage, Hippolyta came running out in quest of Dolores, and on seeing him changed colour and looked confused. She drew back, and tried to cover her confusion with a laugh; but it did not serve, and she had to look another way while she begged him to come into the house and rest for a few moments. No, he would not do that; but would she deign to criticise the sketch he was making of the waterfall in this rainy light? He could not satisfy himself that it looked natural, and the opinion of one who had seen the cascade at all hours would be of service to him. Hippolyta was always ready to be of service to anybody; she threw on a shawl, and went down the steep pathway which led to the water's edge. Rupert, all thanks and eagerness, made her observe the clear yellow light that was filling the sunset heavens, how it spread above the waterfall and irradiated the high branches and slender tracery over their heads, throwing a tawny reflection from the opening to their left upon the pure white foam which crowned the falling torrent. Then he showed her what he had made of it; and she, who could find nothing to criticise,—for it was an admirable sketch,—praised it and him, of course in his artistic capacity, which resulted on his part in a momentary fit of intoxication. She knew the waterfall in all its aspects, and was beguiled into talking about them, even leading him to an upper walk where he might see how the Yale formed its tiny rapids ere it plunged down the rocks. Glanville hearkened respectfully, took out his pencil and dashed down a line or two, declared that she was endowed with the eye of an artist and ought to take lessons in painting, and would have lingered till nightfall had not Hippolyta quietly observed that she must go back to her bread-baking or the batch would spoil, and sped away like a roe-deer, leaving him the helpless victim of her charms. He could not but come again and complete the sketch. Hippolyta saw him from her window as he sat in front of the waterfall. She hesitated a while, and then went down through the garden, and gave him a commission for Lady May. This little action took no time to speak of, and Hippolyta returning

to the house was seen no more by Rupert. Yet he walked to the village where he had left his horse, and rode on to Trelingham in a state of singular happiness. He rehearsed his commission openly and unabashed; if Lady May had an answer to send he could take it, for he was going the same way to-morrow. And it became an understood thing that Glanville intended to exhibit a landscape, in which the cascades of the Yale would be introduced, during the course of that year.

At Trelingham, in spite of her untutored ways, Hippolyta was everybody's favourite, unless I am to except Lady May. She came often, as the Earl desired; and her bearing was so frank and gentle that even the censorious neighbours, who were shocked when they heard that she had been 'taken up' by Lady Alice's brother, began to admit that Miss Valence, though a perfect savage in her habits, was interesting. Not, indeed, that many of them came across her. She begged hard to be introduced as little as possible, and saw only those chance visitors from whom she could not get away in time. When she was thus held captive she spoke hardly at all, but her silence showed that she was attending, and more than one imposing and frivolous matron found in Hippolyta's dumbness a check upon the 'pribble prabble,' to use Fluellen's excellent phrase, which passes current as 'society talk,' and is thought the proper subject-matter of a morning call. Poor Hippolyta, she was much to be pitied! She did not mean to be silent; she was overwhelmed at the kind of conversation on which people fed their minds. Was the great world, which gave laws to the rest of mankind, and boasted of its blood, and wealth, and intellect, so like that deafening house which she had once entered in the Zoological Gardens where parrots and cockatoos scream all day long, and each bird sharpens its beak on iron wire? Most of the ladies, she thought, and Tom Davenant would have agreed with her, had very hard mouths. For want of practice she could not vie with them, and she sat and listened in blank amazement.

But she had been taught to observe, and she perceived that the inmates of Trelingham Court were unlike their visitors. She said to Glanville, whom she often found at

her elbow when she turned round to make a remark, 'It is curious what an unworldly air comes over this place when callers are shut out,—I mean the other callers besides myself. I suppose you, Mr. Glanville, are the nearest approach to a man of the world under this roof, and you would not take a prize,' she concluded, smiling at him in a way he did not think of resenting.

'You are quite right,' he said; 'I hope I shall never win much in that competition. Neither is the Earl an example of what you mean, nor Mr. Davenant. But women of the world now, do you discover none? Lady May, for instance.'

'No; Lady May's position requires her to seem like the rest; but it is all surface. She plays her part because it has been given her, but she is too noble, her gifts are too splendid for it. Like you, she has the genius of an artist, and should be a musician, or write poetry, or do something extraordinary.'

'And the Countess?'

'Oh, the Countess!' said Hippolyta, laughing; 'the Countess is not so much a woman of the world as I am. She is an amusing, a captivating child. There is not malice enough in her composition to make a woman of the world.'

'Not malice, certainly,' thought Glanville, 'but mischief. I am not always pleased with her affection for Hippolyta. However enthusiastic, I doubt that it is quite so simple as it appears.' In which philosophic inference, not communicated to Miss Valence, but the fruit of observation, we shall perhaps see that Rupert was justified.

The only drawback to his contentment was that Ivor did not write; while if Hippolyta was not always happy, she ascribed it, in Lord Trelingham's hearing, to the fact that her father had sent only a laconic message when she told him of her new friends, to the effect that she might please herself in the matter. He subjoined, it is true, a hasty postscript, but it contained merely these words, 'You know that I bear no resentment towards Lord Trelingham.' This was not all she wanted by any means; although the Earl, resolved upon looking at things in a Christian light, took it as a concession and bade her not lose heart. He did not inquire where Colonel Valence was; and though she wrote

frequently, she neither spoke of his doings nor expressed anxiety for his return. No one could suppose that she did not love her father; but, though impressionable, her nerves had been schooled from the first, and the Colonel's uncertain and wandering life was too familiar an experience to make her uneasy. Still, she was alone in the world,—a perilous situation for a maiden of nineteen. Adviser she had none; her Spanish relatives, if such existed, did not come within reach of her; nor were the Trelingham family, however amiable, of the kind to influence one who had been educated on principles which the Earl abhorred, and which Lady May, in spite of her varied accomplishments and real intellect, could not have understood. It can hardly be questioned, indeed, that if Lord Trelingham had realised how far they were from being abstract theories, and what a bearing they had on life, his compassion for Hippolyta would have been vanquished by his dread of their contagion. Rupert was destined to know a little more of them.

It was that difficult time of day, for an artist in a country-house, which begins somewhere about four o'clock in winter and lasts till the dinner-bell puts an end to it, when Glanville, who had been at work in the Great Hall since morning, and felt so tired that he did not know what to do with himself, entered the many-windowed drawing-room which was then empty, and walking across its wide expanse, threw himself into one of the cushioned embrasures where he could lie at ease and look out at the sea beyond. An immense wood-fire was burning on the hearth, and Rupert, to get away from the blaze, had chosen a window as far from it as possible, drawing the heavy velvet curtains about him so as to be screened and comfortable. He soon grew tired of watching the misty waters; his eyes closed, and the young man fell into an innocent and refreshing sleep. How long his slumber continued is immaterial to the story; but it was broken in upon by the sound of voices at no great distance, and as he slowly came back to himself he heard an animated conversation sustained by the three ladies, who, though not resembling the withered hags of fable, were weaving his destiny among them. It was dark on the terrace; but through the aperture of the curtains he could

observe the flickering light of the wood-fire and the figures seated near it,—Lady May with a cup in her hand, sitting upright and addressing Karina, who was in the act of laying a book on the sofa where she half reclined. Hippolyta, buried in the depths of a huge arm-chair, was looking straight into the flames, but, as her expression showed, had an ear for the discussion that was going on. Animated it certainly was; with less refinement of manner it would have appeared a downright quarrel. Lady May was speaking.

'You said the other day, Karina, that I was severe upon your reading. That would be absurd in me. But I do think your uncle would be scandalised if he saw this kind of literature in the hands of any woman.'

'Oh, Uncle William is so precise,' cried the Countess, 'he would not read such a book himself, of course; but he belongs to a past generation when English people read nothing but the Prayer-Book and the *Quarterly Review*. Why shouldn't I read anything that is clever? Besides, this is not one of the new romances. It is an old favourite of mine. Everybody in France knows Rousseau's *Confessions*, or knows about them. What do you say, Miss Valence? You, of course, read everything.' She looked at Hippolyta, who did not stir, but replied:

'What does your cousin say? That is of more consequence than my opinion.'

'I say,' answered Lady May very decidedly, 'that no woman can read the French literature of the last century and not be degraded.'

'Then you have not read it yourself?' said the Countess, in a tone of mocking inquiry.

'Not much; but I know many, both men and women, that have, and whether they admire it or no, they are agreed as to its character. What good can it do you, Karina?'

'What good? it amuses me. It tells me all kinds of things I want to know,—how people dressed, and talked, and ate, and travelled, and made love, and ran away from one another, a hundred years ago, and ever so much more. It must have been a very pleasant world, not like these horrid days when if you do anything it is put in the papers. And I adore sentiment, and virtue, and humanity, and all those

things. I wish we could have a *Petit Trianon* and they would let me keep cows, as Marie Antoinette did.'

'What tinsel and paste!' said Lady May indignantly. 'Yes, sentiment and virtue in the mouth of Rousseau were indeed exquisite. But how can you talk in that idle way about their love-making! There was no such thing as love in the eighteenth century.'

'Paul and Virginia?' objected Hippolyta, still keeping her eyes on the fire.

'Yes, in romance I grant. And Lotte also was a reality when she cut bread and butter for the children; but Werther was not when he wept and raved about her—he was only Goethe the sentimental, describing his fancies, which were the one kind of love he had experienced or knew anything about.'

'I agree with you there,' said Hippolyta; 'all Goethe's love-making was sentimental egoism; like the Spectre of the Brocken it reflected himself.'

'And Jean Jacques, what do you think of him?' inquired the Countess.

'I have read him too little to form a judgment. That book on the sofa I began one day, but I could not go on with it. I felt—it is hard to give another the exact impression—as if, then, I had been imprisoned in a hot-house, with strange flowers all round, the odour of which was sickening and a deadly poison. I should not like to breathe such a moral atmosphere long.'

'How very astonishing!' exclaimed Karina; 'you talk like one of the good people, like my uncle, almost. I thought you did not mind such things.'

Hippolyta looked round now. She was very much hurt. 'I mind them a great deal,' she said; 'why do you think I do not mind them? I have never given you reason.' She spoke very sorrowfully, not as if she were angry or insulted.

'My dear child,' the Countess cried, 'I am so sorry to have hurt your feelings. I don't mind things when I read them. But as you were brought up without religion, I fancied you would not be prejudiced against Jean Jacques, like my cousin.'

'Prejudiced! no,' said Hippolyta, 'that I am not.

Personally, I have an affection for him, his life was so miserable and he seemed made for better things. Jean Jacques was not irreligious, even in your sense. But, as for my education, I see you do not understand what it has been. Shall I tell you?'

'Do,' said the Countess; and 'only as much as you choose,' said Lady May. They were both interested; but Lady May was somewhat doubtful as to the propriety of revelations which, innocent enough on the lips of Miss Valence, might confirm the Countess in her evil ways.

'It will not be so dreadful, I hope,' said Hippolyta, with a smile at Lady May. 'I have been taught on principles unlike your own, perhaps, but I have never done anything that I knew to be wrong. My days have gone by harmlessly. So now I may begin "The Story of Hippolyta Valence, told by herself." There is no need of an introduction.'

Thus far the listener behind the curtain had felt assured that he should only terrify a peaceful company of ladies by appearing in their midst from his place of concealment. But now he was in a frightful dilemma. To escape unobserved was impossible, to stay where he found himself was still more impossible. He looked across at the doors. They might as well have been a thousand miles off; neither to the one nor the other could he get without passing the ladies who occupied that side of the room in force. He thought, as desperate men will, of impossible alternatives—of opening the heavy window, and getting out on the terrace; but that, too, meant noise and discovery. If only it had been the French window lower down! There is a fate in these things. Instant decision alone could save him, and to decide instantly was out of the question. Hippolyta had begun; he did not know what to do; he must remain there imprisoned and trust to a kindly Providence to interpose in his favour. Some one might come in, or the ladies might depart without knowing they had had an auditor. He closed his eyes, but sleep would not come, even if, which I take leave to doubt, it had been seriously invoked. After all, Rupert was human; he had resolved that Hippolyta should be his, and nothing he might hear would shake his resolution. These confidences

must have come after marriage; there was no great harm in hearing them before. Thus he argued, listening the while to Hippolyta's voice, which sounded in his ears like an evening bell in the distance, full of dreaming melody. For even now he was not thoroughly roused, though sleep had fled from him.

'I was born,' said Hippolyta, 'in Spain, not far from Barcelona, where, as I mentioned to Lord Trelingham, my father and mother lived for some time after their marriage. They were devoted to one another and to me. My mother had little or nothing, however, to do with my education. She was not strong, and her friend or servant—but we do not call any one a servant in our way of speaking,—her friend, therefore, Dolores, took charge of me and taught me all she knew as soon as I was capable of learning. She had never been out of her native country, and her ways were primitive enough, as I saw by comparison with those of English people when I came across them. But this advantage they had, I could have lived among the peasantry in whose neighbourhood I spent my earliest years with no less comfort and happiness than any of their daughters. I know the use of right hand and left; I can take care of myself and am not afraid to live alone or to go anywhere I wish. It was, indeed, the main principle of my father's teaching that a woman who needed service or attendance was no better than a child. He thought Nature had made us free by giving us eyes and brains and a pair of hands; that it is an evil custom which, by degrading women to be mere playthings and ornaments, has enslaved men. He was an ardent admirer of Shelley, and like him he preached the emancipation of the whole human race.'

'An admirable thing,' said Lady May; 'but how did he propose to accomplish it?'

Hippolyta answered immediately, 'By making the two sexes equal and free.'

'I should like that, indeed,' exclaimed Karina; 'but the men are too strong for us, and not easily persuaded. They like their wives to be dependent on them for everything.'

'The new creed finds a short way out of that difficulty, at any rate,' said Hippolyta with kindling cheeks. 'If

marriage is slavery, if it cannot be reformed, it must be abolished.' The Countess looked horrified.

Lady May beckoned to her cousin to keep still. 'Karina is interrupting you with her questions,' she said, 'but we can ask questions afterwards. Your own story is what we should be most interested in hearing now.'

'I will go on with it,' said Hippolyta. 'As I was remarking, my father held by the equality of the sexes, and would have their education assimilated in most things. The boys should be taught not to live like barbarians; the girls to use their limbs and their understandings. He would have them frequent the same schools and rival one another in study. I dare say you know that he was a Greek scholar at the University of Cambridge. He loved to throw his principles into the shape of the antique stories; and thus he often warned me that he meant to give me the training of those heroic women, the Amazons, who called themselves "equal to men." That is how I came by my name Hippolyta. My mother said I should never be tall enough to suit such a splendid appellation, and wished me to be called Titania, which is perhaps the prettier of the two.'

'And did you go to school abroad?' asked Lady May; 'you must have gone to America for the mixed education Colonel Valence wanted.'

'No, we lived such an unsettled life. Besides, my father would not have sent me to a boarding-school. I learned all that was necessary at home. My father instructed me in books of every kind; he taught me history, and gave me an enthusiasm for the great movement in which he was playing so many parts. And my mother, lying on her couch, could show me how to make my own dresses, which I have always done since.'

'You wonderful being!' said the Countess. 'I thought you must have gone to a very good *couturière;* but it was your mother, I suppose.'

'I do not think she could ever have had the money,' replied Hippolyta; 'she was a poor girl of Barcelona, whose father was shot by my father's side on the barricades; and that was how he came to know her first, having to inform her as gently as he could that she was an orphan.

I liked to hear my mother tell the story over again, and often asked her for it. Poor dear mother, I miss her every day I live!'

Glanville did not scruple about listening now. He felt touched to the heart. Hippolyta was not crying, but her subdued tones were full of pathos; and as if the last words had stirred recollections which she could not trust herself to utter, she became silent for two or three minutes, while the Countess and Lady May exchanged glances of surprise. Here was a revelation. Miss Valence was a gentlewoman, then, only by courtesy; for her father had renounced his station and her mother had none to renounce.

'Yes,' she resumed, 'I am of the people, and am proud to inherit from my mother an affection for them, which has been my chief happiness. She could not read or write; she had never gone to school and did not know what was meant by the word history. But she could sing the ancient ballads and songs of the peasants which are all the history Spain possesses, and I learnt to sing them from her. She had only one religion—my father; he was to her all that the world could bestow of brave or admirable; and that idolatry came natural, as you may suppose, to me. He was often serious, never harsh. He showed me the meaning of poetry, gave me large freedom, and brought into play as early as possible the powers of reason and conscience, not of fear, servility, or custom. The time must arrive, he said, when I should have only myself to depend on. He would not leave me the property which had been his; it was to be thrown into the common stock of the brotherhood. So that unless hand or brain could support me I should fare ill.'

'But that is monstrous!' exclaimed Lady May; 'what, to leave his only child a beggar! Excuse my vehemence,' she added, 'I see you do not agree with me.'

'I partly understand you, but how *could* I agree with you, my dear Lady May? I shall not be a beggar whilst I have myself. Were I helpless in mind or body, the question would be different. For such cases provision is to be made in the new order of things.'

'But, positively, you are living in Utopia,' said the Earl's daughter; 'cannot you see that these are the idlest dreams? Does Colonel Valence hope to pull the world together at its four corners?'

'I suppose you would describe it so,' answered Hippolyta. 'My father believes in a moral dynamite which will leave only such things standing as reason cannot overthrow. Whatever ought to succumb will succumb. Else we should be governed by dead men who have lain in their graves for thousands of years. Regeneration springs out of the depths; it will be the people's doing.'

'But, anyhow, it will not come yet,' persisted Lady May, in whose eyes the frantic delusion of the whole business was heightened by Hippolyta's composure. 'Come it will not in our time, and how are you, and such as you, to live?'

'As for me, I am better able to make my way without assistance than nine girls out of ten. I can scrub the floor, and blacklead stoves. I can set type. I can speak and write a certain number of languages, and make my own dresses. Can you do as much, Countess?' she asked with a pleasant glance towards the reclining beauty.

'Heaven forbid!' said the Countess. 'I can speak like a parrot any language I hear spoken about me. But I have not a housemaid's gifts nor a printer's.'

'More is the pity,' replied Hippolyta. 'However, since I can do these things, I do not mind facing the world. Moreover, I have the comfort of thinking that I eat no morsel which I have not earned.'

'Well,' said Karina, 'I never earned anything, and I never shall. But that does not signify. You would not condemn me to starve like Ugolino, would you, if the Revolution came?'

'No; I should keep you in a golden cage, as a beautiful curiosity of the past,' said Hippolyta, 'and you should subsist on the money taken at the doors.' They both laughed at this sudden fancy, which was as novel to the speaker as to the person that figured in it. 'But what did you mean by saying it does not signify?'

'Oh, this,' said the other lady: 'I wanted to ask you

whether there would be marrying and giving in marriage when your father had his way. You said not, at the beginning.'

'I said, or at least I had it in mind to say, that there should be no marriages of interest, or *convenance*, or without affection on both sides. There should be no slavery in marriage, no women shut up in a moral seraglio with the bolts and bars of the law keeping them in durance while their husbands were free. They should cease to be chattels. Where there was love there should be marriage; and when love ended marriage should end too. I would burn the body when the spirit was fled; the coffin you call marriage with the corpse of a dead affection.'

Lady May had become very thoughtful. She raised her eyes and looked steadily at Hippolyta till she had done speaking, and then said, with remarkable earnestness, 'Is not that the doctrine of Free Love?'

'If you like,' replied the young enthusiast, 'but I call it Free Marriage.'

'Where is the difference? I can see none,' said Lady May.

'That would be a long story. Love ought to be free, or it is worthless. But you understand by free love yielding to every impulse of the passions, and I mean obeying the true woman's heart and despising tyrannical laws and usages. My father's motto has ever been, to distrust impulse and to despise custom. They are his very words.'

'But a woman has nothing to go upon except impulse and custom,' said Lady May. 'It is exactly how I should describe her life. Men, of course, have something else; they are strong, and can override custom and put down their impulses.'

'And why should a woman not do the same? She is strong in her affections, and she might be as strong in her reason if she were shown how. At any rate, when I learnt from my father that we women have a task and a duty in the world of to-morrow, I did not understand him to be encouraging caprice, or unbridled desires, or wandering fancies. I have seen many households in travelling over Europe with him; and when they were unhappy, the

reason, as he pointed out, was that women are only half-women, not so just or truthful as men because their foreheads have been flattened and their minds kept childish. The balance will never hang equal between the sexes till their union is free and rational.'

'How come you to have thought so much at nineteen on a matter like this?' inquired Lady May.

'Because my father believes that knowledge is better than ignorance. He pointed out the books I was to read; and my mother, who understood him and was of a singularly apt mind, instructed me according to his wishes.'

'Then you do not approve of marriage, after all?' said the Countess. 'You think it is a wicked custom. I see that you do agree with the French romances, although you have not read much of Jean Jacques. How my uncle would open his eyes if he heard you!'

'I did not say all marriages were wicked,' answered Hippolyta; 'only that the true marriage is the union of heart with heart, of human beings who are free to give themselves and worthy of one another. Custom is nothing, pledging the hand is nothing; and passion, they say in the stories, will not last. In my father's creed marriage is the ideal of human life. It will be realised as it ought to be with other good things that are waiting.'

'But oh, my dear,' sighed the Countess, 'we cannot wait. We get old so soon—ten years sooner than the men, for they have the best of everything. Look at my Cousin Tom, for example. He is just about my own age; and if we were equal, as you said in your very pretty sketch—and I am sure I wish we were—but he looks ever so much younger than I do.'

Hippolyta was inwardly amused. The Countess's tender idyll was no secret to her; but whether she thought it should be realised in the golden age she would not say. A long pause followed. Glanville, his mind filled with conflicting thoughts, irritated, yet more in love than ever, was hardly conscious that he might be discovered at any moment, and that the consequences would be dreadful. During the conversation, which had absorbed all their attention, the ladies had neglected to tend the fire, and it

was dying down into dull white ashes, with a spark here and there glowing out of them. The sensitive Karina, usually wrapt in furs, began to shiver and look round for the explanation. 'Why, May,' she cried, 'the fire is gone out; we have forgotten to drink our tea, and it is quite dark and dismal. I am half-dead with cold. Do ring for lights.'

'We had better adjourn altogether,' replied her cousin, to which Rupert mentally added an amen. 'I don't know what has come over us to be sitting here like the witches in Macbeth. Now, my dear,' she continued, taking Hippolyta by the hand, 'since it is the first time you are dining here, you had better come to my room and put yourself in the hands of my maid. You would only get nervous if I were not there to see after you.'

Rupert strained his eyes through the curtains, and held his breath while the ladies were moving towards the door. They were very slow, for they had shawls and wrappers to collect in the semi-darkness; and it was not until the open door allowed a gleam of light to come in from the hall that they could see what they were doing. At last, at long last, they went. Glanville gave a sigh of relief; he waited a moment till the coast was clear, and then pulling the curtains aside, rose and stretched himself. He felt extremely tired and not a little excited. It was about time, he said, that this strange conversation had ended, for he could not have endured either his cramped position or the thought of eavesdropping much longer. And with these words he grasped the handle of the door. At the same moment he felt some one turning it from the outside.

Aghast, he staggered back, the door opened, and Hippolyta came running in. As the light fell full upon Rupert, standing like a lost man in front of her, she stopped and put her hands to her breast. A nervous woman would have screamed, a silly one would have fainted; but Hippolyta, possessed of the rare courage which answers at call, did neither. Her eyes met those of the artist, steadily, inquiringly. He was dead silent. 'You did not come in just now?' she said. He replied in a faint voice, 'No; it was—I don't remember how long ago.' She blenched, but

kept looking at him still. 'And you heard what I have been saying?'—'I heard all,' was the low answer.

'Then,' she said, with the greatest agitation in voice and manner, 'oh, then, you despise me;' and as she spoke she turned from him. He caught her by the sleeve.

'Despise you!' he cried in a tone of the deepest love; 'Hippolyta, I adore you.'

She plucked her sleeve from him and was gone. He heard her step on the stairs, but he dared not follow. He was so overcome that he leaned against the wall to recover himself. Was he ashamed or exultant, struck with remorse or full of hope and courage? He was all these at once. For the notions that Hippolyta had learned from her father he cared not a jot. Hers was a soul that turned them all to favour and to prettiness; she believed them because they seemed noble in her eyes and came with authority from the being she most revered. That she had laid bare her very innermost heart in speaking with Lady May and the Countess he was certain. She could never have been so frank with him, even though he stood in the place of a declared lover. He despise Hippolyta! Good heavens, why could he not this instant follow her and fall at her feet? But the die was cast. She had no choice now but to understand. He would speak that evening, if it were possible; to-morrow, at any rate. He had meant to wait a little for fear of alarming the bird ere it was caught in the snare; but events had proved too much for him. He must venture all, and, if necessary, venture again and again. While he stood absorbed in meditation the first dinner-bell sounded, and awoke him to the things of earth. He ran upstairs with a quicker step than usual, wishing that for the next four and twenty hours society and all that it inherit could be dissolved, leaving him and Hippolyta to be their own universe. At the bottom of his heart he doubted her love as little as he doubted his own. 'Free love, free marriage,' he repeated mechanically; 'yes, Hippolyta, it is love that makes us free.'

He hardly knew what he was doing, and made sad havoc among his dressing things during the next half-hour. The fingers were hot and trembling with which he fumbled

at his neckcloth; he took up this and that which were nothing to his purpose, looked about the room for what he held in his hand, had just sense enough not to attempt shaving — which, had he begun, this chronicle might speedily have been ended — and was not in any way ready when the second bell resounded in his ears. He came in as the rest were seated round the dinner-table, and took his place, which the fates had willed should be next to Hippolyta. He seemed distraught, but I regret to say that his distraction did not originate in a feeling of shame for what had happened. This honourable man, who for a long hour had listened behind a curtain to conversation which was not intended for any man's ears, could be scarcely said to remember where he had passed the afternoon. Some remnant of grace hindered him from directing his eyes towards Hippolyta. He knew very well, notwithstanding, both how she looked and what flowers she wore in her beautiful golden hair. He knew that she felt as uncomfortable and as happy as he did; that the slight quiver in her voice when she spoke—and she said but little —had infinite meanings; that her shyness equalled his, although it was better concealed; and when dinner was drawing to an end he absolutely looked up and met the tremulous smile on her lips with the shadow of an answering smile upon his own.

The Earl, unconsciously, was very good to them. Knowing Hippolyta's unwillingness to say much in the presence of strangers, he had invited her on a day when the family were alone; and as she appeared to be still in terror he acted like a considerate host, and spoke of things indifferent which required no answering, or narrated incidents out of his own past, and had the gratification of seeing the young lady's eyes bent on him while he discoursed. For no reward in the world would she have ventured to address Rupert except in monosyllables. Once, I say, she met his gaze, and her lips fashioned themselves unwillingly into a smile. But that over, she was glad to escape; and when the gentlemen entered the drawing-room Glanville learned that Miss Valence had been too much fatigued to stay up, and was departed to

her slumbers. His apology, his declaration of love or war, must wait until the moon came out of the clouds again.

But Hippolyta had not gone home; that was his comfort. He should see her in the morning. She appeared at breakfast; was tongue-tied as on the previous evening, and exceedingly careful not to address the young man, whose courage, dashed for a moment by her silence, revived when he looked upon her calm and beautiful face. She was agitated by no inward trouble, only absorbed and mastered. Could it be that she thought he would not speak? He waited to hear of the arrangements for the day. Hippolyta, still pleading fatigue, asked that the expedition they had planned might be put off till the afternoon, or till her next visit. Rupert was exultant. If she stayed in the house or in the Park he would find his opportunity. And so it came to pass. The other ladies went out riding. Miss Valence sat in the morning-room, where the lights were pleasant until mid-day, and a cheerful fire was burning. She had drawn her chair to the window, and was writing at a small desk, bending over which her figure was visible to any one that came that way along the terrace. Glanville walked about in the air, trying to collect his thoughts and cool the fever which ran in his veins; but, crisp as was the morning, and cold and clear in the stinted sunshine the aspect of the distant waters, he could not bring down his high-beating pulse. And when he had passed by the window where Hippolyta sat more times than he could reckon, he summoned up heart of grace, and walked boldly into the hall. In another moment he was by her side. Hippolyta, in her extreme agitation on seeing him there, stood up and had not a word to say. They both coloured violently.

'Miss Valence,' he began; he could get no further. She did not know how to rebuke or to encourage him, or which of the two she meant. He waited until she resumed her seat, then began once more. 'May I speak to you?' he said, in the lowest tones of a passion-stirred voice. 'I have an apology to make which ought not to be delayed. I have a mind to unburden of its load. It seems as though I were always doomed to offend you; and yet,—oh Hippolyta,

he said, bursting out, 'you must, you do understand that since I saw you at the Hermitage I have had no other thought, day or night——"

'Than to offend me?' she asked, with her quick sense of the entanglement into which this eloquent lover had got himself. 'I am sure I ought to be very much obliged.' But the taunt would not serve. Rupert was in too serious a mood to be laughed out of his passion.

'Don't,' he cried; 'you are cruel. I hardly know what I am saying; but I do know, and I must try to make you know, what I mean. Hippolyta, if you can return the love I have felt ever since that day you will make me the happiest man alive. Can you, Hippolyta?'

Her face was burning. She grasped the edge of the writing-table to steady herself. Which way to turn she did not know, but it seemed to her that unless she made a resolute effort she should fall off the chair fainting. Rupert stood looking down on the ground, motionless and silent. The murmur of the waves came, like the sound of bells in the air, faint and musical, athwart the stillness; and neither of them spoke. Slowly, however, Hippolyta gathered up her strength as if for a supreme effort. She said to Rupert in a steady voice where no vibration betrayed her feeling, 'Mr. Glanville, let me ask you one thing.' He raised his eyes. She seemed perfectly mistress of herself as she went on, 'Do you mean that you respect or despise me?'

'Oh heavens,' he exclaimed, 'is it possible you can doubt? Hippolyta, I worship the ground you walk on. I never saw any one to compare with you.'

'And yet you listened yesterday afternoon to a conversation in which, if aught was said that as a matter of principle could shock you,—and I suppose many things shocked you,—I was the offender. I am well aware of the views men commonly take, what they expect of a woman, and what virtues they prize.'

'But I am not such a man,' returned Glanville with eagerness. 'Why do you not blame me rather for hearkening where I had no right, than yourself for uttering sentiments which you learned in infancy?'

'Blame you?' she answered, as if the notion had not occurred to her, 'because I did not think of it. I supposed you an honourable man. If you overheard me and made no sign, I daresay there was some explanation. Oh no, I did not blame you.'

'God bless you, Hippolyta,' he cried; 'you are the most admirable woman in the world. Was I to blame? I should have been perhaps, I confess, but for the feeling of intense and ardent love which made it impossible I should hear and not love you still more. It was that, and only that, which hindered me from at once coming forward when you began the story of your life' And then, in few words, he told her how he had fallen asleep and what happened afterwards. She listened to him gravely, and as though waiting for the conclusion he would draw from her yesterday's avowal. It was not long in coming.

'I am not given to philosophy or revolution myself,' were his words, 'nor can I pretend to feel enthusiasm about anything except art. But what does it matter? If you will stoop to love me, Hippolyta, I shall be happy. And if you will not? Oh, I cannot bear to think it. You see how impossible it is that I should live without you.'

He drew nearer as he spoke, and the great flame of his affection seemed to be rushing about her and hiding the whole world in its divine radiance. In her own mind she had surrendered already; what was there to oppose to Rupert's vehemence and sincerity? But still, she would have a clear understanding.

'You know how I have been brought up, you have heard what I think, and in spite of all that you profess to care for me?'

'Profess to care? Are you not the very breath of my existence? I am talking, perhaps, like a fool, like a boy. But, Hippolyta, lay upon me any task, put my sincerity to the test, do as you please with me now and henceforth, and you will see whether my love is honest and true.' His vehemence made him gasp for breath.

Hippolyta rose and put her hand in his. The maiden's eyes were glowing with soft light; the flush on her countenance was beautiful to see. 'Rupert,' she said. Then

she too paused an instant. How he waited for the next word! 'Rupert, I believe in you. Such as I am, since you—why should I not say it?—since you think of me in this way I will be yours.' He took her other hand in his with a convulsive grasp. But she drew herself away, and continued, 'Only you must not come between my father and me. I have promised to do his bidding in many ways that for the present I cannot explain. Free I am not. And, therefore, if you will not consent to wait until these things are over and done with, say the word. Let all this be as though it had never been. You could not guess what a strange and difficult course is mine.'

'Ah no,' said Glanville, 'it shall never be spoken, the word that would separate us. I am willing to wait. How long, Hippolyta? I can be patient if you love me.'

'It may not be long,' was her answer: 'a few months; at the outside a year or two. My father has lately shown more reserve in speaking to me than he was wont. But I know the time is running out, and that a crisis is approaching. Can you trust me to do you no injustice, to do myself none?'

'I trust you altogether, my darling,' he said; and there his great joy overcame him. The strong man broke down. Hippolyta was much affected. With a charming mixture of affection and timidity she laid her hand on his arm and said bashfully, 'Why do you cry? Are you displeased at anything I have said? No, I see you are not. I thought Englishmen never showed their feelings.' She laughed very softly, with the tenderest playfulness in her accents. Rupert caught her in his arms and for a single moment held her there. But she slipped away from him, and, leaving her unfinished letter on the desk, fled out of the room.

Such was Rupert Glanville's engagement with Hippolyta Valence. When they met again in private, which by favour of the gods happened that very afternoon, it was decided that they should keep their promises secret until Hippolyta gave permission to make them known. This was not Rupert's proposal, or entirely his wish; for he felt, with reason, that he could not have a better defence against

Lady May, nor put forward a more intelligible excuse for his change of conduct towards her, than to announce the engagement. But Hippolyta, to whom he did not speak of the Earl's daughter, was apprehensive that a premature disclosure of what had taken place would thwart her efforts to bring about a reconciliation between the families. She knew how great was Lady May's influence over Lord Trelingham; neither had she waited until now to discover that something in the nature of an enthusiastic friendship, perhaps of love, existed on her side which had not been returned by Rupert. She would be a rival, sooner or later,—unsuccessfully, no doubt, but a rival still, —for the hand of the artist. That need not signify once Hippolyta had brought the Earl and her father into some sort of agreement. But meanwhile, secrecy appeared to her an absolute part of discretion. She was not afraid of losing Rupert, his love would protect him, and she had been too well used to deny herself pleasant things, and therefore knew how to be patient. The gentleman, in that submissive state which lasts till he reaches the altar, and ceases as if by magic when he is returning down the church after certain words have been spoken, yielded uncomplainingly. He was glad enough to have an assurance of possessing Hippolyta at whatever time and under such circumstances as she, in her wisdom, might determine. You never saw a mountain-pard so tamed by kindness, so subdued and willing to follow the hand that led him along, as this fiery, clear-eyed, tender-hearted Rupert. His best friends, always excepting Ivor Mardol, would not have known him as he stood humbly attendant on the behest of his newly-found mistress. Might he tell Ivor? he inquired. Hippolyta reflected for a while, and answered between a smile and a sigh that she did not doubt his friend, but it would be as well to let nobody hear of it besides her father. To him she was writing by the next post.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CELTIC KING ARTHUR

So these two, opening the gates of Elysium, went down into its heathery dells and fresh green woodlands side by side. They had found one another amid the wastes of the world, and might ramble where it pleased them in a golden dream. They loved with the ardour of youth and the intensity of exceptional natures. Hippolyta's strange education had kept her innocent of the thousand artificialities which too often spoil the best of women, making them helpless, sentimental, or false, when they desire to be brave and true. She was the most loyal of human beings; her temperament was steeped in poetry, and the sweet impulses of the heart gave her slightest words a fascination. But where she loved she could not be sentimental; and Glanville, who had sometimes felt wearied with Lady May's—how shall I call it?—too great effusiveness, was delighted with a companion at once so charming and so sensible. She told him much of her earlier life and her father's character and principles. To Rupert Colonel Valence seemed an enigma. He did not comprehend how a man who had professed such a hopeless creed as he had gathered from the Colonel's lips in the churchyard at their first and only meeting could spend his life in forwarding Utopian schemes. But Hippolyta, when this difficulty was urged, had much to say in explanation. 'My father,' she remarked, 'does take a sad view of existence. He thinks the forces of Nature are terrible and often malignant. To struggle against them, he says, would be as foolish as attempting to sweep the stars out of the sky. They are high above us, and we

cannot reach them, though their influence shapes our destinies. But he will not allow that human misgovernment, or the ignorance of an oppressed multitude, or the distinctions of ranks and birth, are among the forces of Nature. When we come to that Utopia which you wise men of the world scorn'—she laughed and looked at Glanville, who was delighted to be so mocked—'we shall still be face to face with the terrible unknown powers that we can neither control nor appease. So my father says. But is that any reason, he asks, why we should tolerate kings and kaisers? Thus he combines the deep melancholy, which seems to grow upon him every year, with a burning zeal and such incessant activity as will not suffer him to stay at home. I feel it, but I would not hinder him from being noble. My husband, when I have one, must be father and mother too. Will he, Rupert, think you?'

I need not chronicle Rupert's answer. He was willing that the Colonel should be always absent if they might be together. And they were, sometimes with no third to lessen their happiness, but oftenest in the company of their friends at Trelingham. One day, in particular, about a month after their engagement, Rupert, who spent many hours in the chalet working at his designs, begged Lady May and the rest of them to pay him a visit and see what he had done. The 'rest of them' included Hippolyta, who now often dined at Trelingham, and occupied the room which her kind host insisted on calling hers, and which was kept for her use whether she came or no.

It was a morning in March, but that mild climate turns March to April, and the promise of spring was in the air, filling it with dewy freshness. The party was larger than usual, and included not only the three ladies, but the Earl himself, Tom Davenant, and the learned Mr. Truscombe, clergyman of the parish, whose devotion to King Arthur had nearly sent Glanville home at the beginning of our story. The naval expedition which crossed the mere consisted of two comfortable skiffs and an outrigger for Tom Davenant; and luncheon was to be served in the chalet at the close of the exhibition. Glanville had expressly invited Mr. Truscombe. They were very good friends, and, although

wide as the poles asunder on all other subjects, had, as we know, various thoughts in common regarding their hero.

'I must confess,' said Mr. Truscombe, as they stood before the drawings, 'that I have never had patience with the ultra-sceptics who look upon King Arthur as a myth:

> "That gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak,"

as one of their poets describes him. In my two volumes may be seen documents which prove not merely that he lived, but when he was born, how long he reigned over Britain, and the approximate dates of his twelve great battles with the heathen from over sea, together with fragments of the laws he enacted at Camelot, London, and York. As well, on the strength of poetical confusion in the Song of Roland, deny that Charles the Great existed as, on a like ground in the Morte d'Arthur and similar epic treatments of our subject, refuse to believe that Arthur was one of our most valiant monarchs.'

Glanville listened to the worthy man in respectful silence; and when he had concluded took up his parable.

'You and I, dear sir,' he said, 'are of one mind as to the essential point, which is that a medieval writer, like Sir Thomas Malory, could understand, and therefore could truly represent, no age but his own. The art of seeing through the eyes of a dead or distant generation was born, one may say, yesterday. It is only the modern artist or historian that can picture King Arthur in his habit as he lived and the world which he dwelt in. Suppose him to be a real personage of the fifth or sixth century——'

'No need to suppose, my good sir,' interrupted Mr. Truscombe; 'I have proved abundantly that he cannot have been born later than——'

'Quite so,' said Glanville; 'I accept your data and do not discuss them. For me, as an artist, the question is how, if such a man existed, did he appear to the eye, what type of race did he belong to, of what species was his military apparel, his camp, his court? On such points, I contend, the writers upon chivalry are unsafe, or rather impossible,

guides. They knew nothing of the ages that went before them. Fancy one of Arthur's knights being described as a near relation, cousin in some degree—I forget which—of Joseph of Arimathea!'

The company was disposed to laugh, but not so Mr. Truscombe. 'Ah, there,' he said, 'they may well have been in the right. For Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury about twenty years, as I calculate, after the Ascension; and as he may have married in Britain——'

Glanville, who saw that he was on the very edge of an abyss into which next moment the erudite but fantastic Mr. Truscombe would drag him down, hastened to save himself by timely admissions.

'Yes,' he said, 'yes. I am sure you have made your calculations with admirable care, and I have not a word to say against Joseph of Arimathea or Glastonbury. All I meant was that the elements, the necessary ingredients of a sixth century epic must be of quite a different cast from those which were taken after the Crusades to construct the legend—I would say the cycle—of Arthur.'

'And what do you suppose the true elements to be?' inquired Hippolyta, who was interested and forgot her timidity while she was speaking. But she knew her face was burning when she had got the words out of her mouth.

'Look at these drawings,' replied Glanville; 'I think you will perceive in them a glimmering of my idea. I do not pretend, however, to minute learning; and I am willing to go one mile even with Sir Thomas Malory, if I am not compelled to go twain. I agree, for instance, that historical reproduction is not the same thing as archæology. But there is a middle way between the realism we cannot hope to achieve and a caricature, if I may term it so, borrowed chiefly from what we see around us—from the stark, staring present—and given out as an image of the past. Nor, again, do I say that you may not, if you have genius like Mr. Tennyson, array these old-world stories in the garb of our century; but then they cease to be epic or historical, and become fables with a moral running through them. One kind of reality or inspiration they lose to assume another, and I have no quarrel with such a transformation.'

'But I have,' said Mr. Truscombe in his deep voice; 'it is tampering with holy things. The man who moralises King Arthur into a fable will perhaps have as little respect for King David.'

'Anyhow,' Glanville went on, 'if the House of Trelingham is to be represented as descending from Uther Pendragon, it will never serve to paint on these walls the fancies of the late middle age. Now, I conceive that the older epic is the more truly poetical. It has less monotony; it does not give you ever-recurring adventures of a similar type, castles all built on one plan, enamelled meadows with a fountain in the middle of them, tournaments so much alike that to describe one is to know all, and a small company of actors which may be reduced to a knight, a damsel in distress, a villainous dwarf, and Merlin the Enchanter. I feel the exquisite pathos of certain incidents and the grandeur of certain quests. But none of these things need be discarded, and much may be gained for poetry, if we fill them with the rude, tumultuous warrior life, and light this up again with the gleam of a declining or a nascent civilisation such as did, in fact, shed a terror and a glory over the Arthurian period. But, really, I am making a speech. It will be pleasanter, perhaps, to see what I have endeavoured to design.'

'Yes, but you can go on talking,' said the Countess. 'I know a little of the older poetry, which I began to read during those terrible long nights in Russia when we sat as still as mice, not having a word to say or anything to amuse ourselves with except cards, which I hated. And I do like the ballads and those strange old German stories, much better than the *Idylls of the King*. They are so wild, they make the blood freeze in your veins with horror and then hot with a kind of war-dance. You know the tales I mean,' she said, speaking to Lady May; 'the Nibelung stories and those gruesome ballads about swan's wings dropping blood.'

'Upon my word,' answered Lady May, 'you will give your friends a delightful idea of your character if these are the things that please you.'

'I understand Madame de Lutenieff,' said the artist, 'and I am glad to see that she understands me. The

battle for Britain between Saxon and Cymri cannot have been child's play. It was "sword-play" rather, and "shield lightnings," to quote a metaphor of the latest singers. There ought to be the feeling of an everlasting struggle in pictures of the time. Again, there is the extraordinary combination of Roman customs inherited during their stay in Britain with the ancient habits and traditions which existed before their arrival and lasted when they were gone. The Romans, the Cymri, the Saxons—add to these the Celts who brought over sea other legends, other manners,—allied to those of their British cousins, yet not the same,—and arts, like that of working in fine gold and colours, which have never been indigenous within the four corners of this island. I daresay I am using terms rather loosely, and Mr. Truscombe will set me right. But such has been my notion,—the cycle of Arthur is of a more elemental period than that in which it became famous, and the colours in which it is usually painted are not its own. The legends of Ossian and Cuchullain have more to say to it than Boiardo; it is partly Roman, but more than all it is Celtic, in its dim enchantments, its fury of hopeless battle, its almost feminine tenderness of friendship, its fainting passion, its religious ardours, all at length vanishing in defeat, and being found no more.'

Mr. Truscombe was somewhat too literal to follow the artist, and would now have been glad to ask whether he believed in a real King Arthur or held him to be a coinage of the brain. But, somehow, Glanville's eloquence daunted the antiquarian. He was fain, therefore, to take up the nearest of the drawings, which represented a pirate ship disembarking its mailed hordes, and to put a few searching questions on the subject of chain armour, regarding which he was the first authority in Europe. Glanville replied; and the others looked at his designs.

On so genial a day, when the sun was bright and warm, indoors and out seemed equally alluring. The party scattered,—some remaining in the study to discuss the drawings point by point, others lingering about the verandah, or going down to the boats and paddling round the chalet, which on every side presented a different but agreeable

aspect. While they were thus occupied Rupert invited Hippolyta to ascend the watch-tower. She looked round for a companion, but every one was busy, and she ran gaily up the stairs with him. The watch-tower was empty, and the great window gave a delightful view of the long gorge with its waving woods, the meandering silver thread which marked the course of the Yale, and the clear-shining waters with a circle of clouds above them which closed in the scene. Side by side Rupert and Hippolyta stood, without uttering a word, in that most intimate of companionships which would be lessened, not added to, by speaking. Their cup was full, was brimming over. Happiness had come to them and seemed willing to stay. The breeze which fanned their cheeks, the light which rested lovingly upon their heads and appeared to caress them, was intoxication enough. They could have remained silent thus and lost in a delicious sense of their nearness to one another had not some movement on the waters below them broken the spell. It was only Tom Davenant mooring his outrigger at the steps. Glanville smiled, and, as if remembering the purpose that had brought him, went to a chest of drawers in the room, and taking thence a square sheet of paper, as it would seem, returned to Hippolyta and held it before her. The young lady looked, drew back a little to see the object more clearly, and took it in her hand with an exclamation of delight. 'Oh Rupert,' she cried, 'when did you paint this?'

'He laughed mischievously. 'If you speak so loud what will become of your precious secret, Hippolyta?'

'True,' she said in a lower tone; 'but I am so astonished. How could you recollect me in my riding-habit, and paint it all from memory. For you never saw me in this attitude but once.'

'How could I recollect? Ask rather how I could forget. I saw you day and night as you stood in the room downstairs, your head turned expectantly towards the door and a book in your hand. You pretended to be afraid, but your eyes did not look it. Oh, it was easy enough to paint, I can assure you, Hippolyta.'

'Hush, you mustn't say Hippolyta,' she whispered, 'and

keep your distance, sir. Yes, it is beautifully done. But where are my riding-gloves? I don't look complete without them.'

'They were lying on a chair when I came in and disturbed you. Then you took them up, intending to go. But you left one of them behind, all the same.'

'Did I, indeed?' she said, with great calmness. 'And I suppose you found it. You must restore it, please.' She was laughing to herself slightly.

'I wish I had found it,' said Glanville pettishly, 'but it fell to the lot of Ivor Mardol to do that; and the wretch threw it into the mere.'

Hippolyta became interested. 'How do you know he found it?' she asked.

'Because he showed it me. I held it for two or three minutes. Then he took it away again, and said it ought to be destroyed.'

'Did he say anything else?'

'I don't think he said, but he implied that a message had come with the glove.'

When Hippolyta heard these words she became very quiet. She was thinking whether to leave matters as they stood, or explain them to Rupert. When she had made up her mind she said, with her eyes fixed on her own portrait, 'And you told him who had brought the message?'

'I told him nothing,' answered Rupert. 'I had not your permission. Moreover, it was no concern of mine. There are subjects on which Ivor and I have agreed that confidence between us would be impossible, and we are the best of friends notwithstanding.'

'Well,' she said, 'that is right, and only what I should expect from both of you. I do not know Mr. Mardol except by your report, though of course I knew his name when I came here that morning. I have never seen him. But I may, without breach of orders, tell you what concerns myself. I remember saying that my visit was due to curiosity—and, in fact, it was. I had a message to give your friend of great, though to me unknown, import. Nor could I entrust it to another, or present myself at Trelingham. In this difficulty I forget who told me that Mr.

Mardol had taken up his abode in the chalet, which I had often seen from the heights over there, but had never entered. The thought occurred to me that I had better make an attempt to see him here. I was curious about the place, for, as perhaps I told you, my father used to be its regular tenant when he was a young man. Whether I saw Mr. Mardol was of no consequence. I could make pretty sure that he would receive my message once I was able to get into his study. I came to the water's edge, examined the state of the rooms by means of a pocket telescope I carried with me, and arrived at the conclusion that there was no one at home. I determined to hazard it, and rowed across, being afraid only that somebody might come from the other side and catch me before I disembarked. However, nothing of the sort happened. I ventured in, left my message in such a way that it could not be overlooked, and went, somewhat timidly I confess, into the remaining rooms, like Bluebeard's wife when her husband was gone out. I little expected that Bluebeard would return from my side of the water; and I was more alarmed than you think when I saw you. Did you notice any gesture I made as you opened the door?'

'No,' said Glanville; 'I was too much taken aback to notice anything, except that you were the most lovely woman I had ever set eyes on.'

'Quiet, quiet,' she answered. 'No, I soon perceived you could not be the person of whom I was in quest, or you would have given me the countersign. Dear me,' she went on meditatively, 'when my father joined the movement if any one had talked to a stranger,—and you are a stranger, you know——.' He held up his hand, as if to threaten her, but she motioned him to keep still, and continued, 'Talked, I say, of signs and countersigns, he would have been judged a traitor and punished as he deserved. But now we are coming more and more into the open; there will soon be little secrecy left.'

They heard Tom Davenant calling Rupert. 'The Earl wants you,' he said, as they came downstairs. 'I think there is some plan afoot about your drawings and my birthday, though the two things haven't much connection, one

would think. It is all the Countess's doing. I wish she would let it alone. She is too clever by half.'

On entering the studio they found the party collected round Rupert's drawings, and Madame de Lutenieff in earnest conversation with her cousin. She at once came to the artist, and with enthusiasm in her accents said to him, 'Oh, Mr. Glanville, I do so hope you will take my side. I am sure as a painter you ought.'

'I shall have the greatest pleasure in doing so,' he answered gallantly, 'as soon as I know what the discussion is about. But Mr. Davenant has left that for you to tell.'

'Mr. Davenant never comes to my help in anything,' she said, with a reproachful look at that young man, who instead of attending to her was considering the signs of the times, so far as they could be studied from the window in front of him.

'I don't see the good of a dress ball,' said Tom, without looking round. 'Why cannot people dance in their ordinary clothes and not make themselves into a museum of curiosities? Fancy me got up like your Launcelots and your Percivals, or whatever you call them! They look absurd enough on a stage, but in a ballroom where you know who the fellows are they look twenty times more ridiculous.'

'But then,' said Lady May, 'you profess to hate dancing altogether and you don't want to keep your birthday, so you are out of court. This is the case,' she continued, addressing Glanville: 'my Cousin Karina was struck with the *ensemble*, to use her own term, of your designs, and thought they would fall into admirable groups if we could get people to dress up to them. She is very fond of dancing,—are you not, Karina?' The Countess made a gesture of delight, but would not interrupt Lady May, who went on to explain that among the festivities to celebrate Mr. Davenant's majority—she looked at Tom as she spoke—a dress ball would do much to enhance the general pleasure, and there was the Great Hall, with its frescoes begun, inviting them to illustrate the floor from the walls, so to speak, and to make a grand *tableau vivant* of the Arthurian legends. It would be an original and quaint device, but without Glanville's aid in designing dresses and sketching

the groups it could not be carried out. How did it strike him?

Instead of answering like a sensible young man, Rupert turned demurely to Miss Valence and inquired what she thought. She laughed, and blushed, but would not reply beyond saying that in these matters she had no opinion to give.

'But Mr. Glanville is quite right,' said the Countess; 'you ought to have an opinion, my dear. For you would of course shine in our galaxy that evening.'

'I shine in a galaxy?' said Hippolyta, laughing; 'you forget, Countess, that I have never been introduced to society, and should most likely not be admitted if I wished for such a thing.'

'Oh, nonsense,' replied Karina; 'you have the most old-fashioned ideas. In the first place, there is no such thing as society, in that exclusive sense of the word, now; and in the second, it would not matter if there were. Make your *début* at Trelingham, my dear, and rely upon it you will find no doors locked afterwards.'

Hippolyta smiled. 'Now that your door is unlocked to me,' she said, addressing Lord Trelingham, 'I do not think I mind whether the rest are shut or open.'

'My dear young lady,' said he, taking her hand, 'you will be most welcome if you come to this house, either on the occasion my niece has mentioned, or any other. Colonel Valence may have renounced society, but that should be no injury to his daughter, and only those would raise a question who do not know you.'

'Well, and of course you will come,' said Karina; 'that is all settled. I will be your chaperon and—but have you learned dancing?' she asked with comic anxiety.

Hippolyta answered, 'I am more of a Spanish than an English girl, remember. Did you ever hear of one who could not dance, or was not fond of dancing? It is the most exquisite enjoyment I know. But, indeed, I have not danced in such fine company as this would be.'

'Never mind,' said the Countess; 'you will probably put us all to shame. However, is it decided, and does Mr. Glanville promise his services?'

'Mr. Glanville will promise anything,' replied the infatuated artist. He had never till then thought of dancing with Hippolyta. What a heaven of happiness was in store! How admirable of the Countess to propose it and of Tom Davenant to come of age just at that time! To get any further conversation of a sensible kind from Rupert was for the rest of the day impossible. The Countess made her observations; Lady May, whose suspicions had been lulled to sleep, was not blind, and began once more to feel the gnawing pangs of jealousy; while Mr. Davenant wondered that people should care so much about tiring themselves to death in a hot and crowded assembly, and would have given all the balls between now and next year for a good day's fishing.

But the dress ball was decided on, and there were to be tableaux representing King Arthur and his Table Round.

CHAPTER XIX

TABLEAUX VIVANTS

In proposing, out of her own head, a dress ball at which Miss Valence should be present, the Countess Lutenieff was carrying out one of those schemes, so dear to the impish character she affected, through which accidents of a perverse kind are wont to happen. She was not very learned or large-minded; and, like most ignorant persons of a quick-witted turn, she was subtle, preferring always the crooked path to the straight, and delighted when she could imagine that she made the puppets dance to her playing. Since she had recovered from the shock of her husband's death—it had taken her about six months, for she was of an affectionate disposition—her one aim had been to marry Tom Davenant, whom from a child she had worshipped. This alone reconciled her to the English sky with its everlasting gray tones, and the English manners at once so self-satisfied and so chilling. But Mr. Davenant was a shy bird, and would not stoop at her call. Nor had she a falconer's voice to lure him back again from his pursuit of more interesting prey. He, like the rest of the Davenants, was guided by a fine sense of honour,—too fine thought the Russian lady, since it appeared to be driving him on a marriage with his cousin. And its recompense might possibly be the hand of Lady May in spite of the six years which divided their ages. Nothing, said Karina to herself, will make me secure on that side but a violent passion on the part of Lady May for some one who is not Tom Davenant. Might not Glanville be the man? She had hoped and prayed so while the painting went on

in the picture-gallery; but that was now at an end. The artist seemed to be dominated by a fresh sentiment in which Lady May had no part, and as Tom's birthday drew near, bringing with it apprehensions of calamity, the Countess sat down to consider what could be done. If Glanville was not desperately in love elsewhere he would fall a sure victim to her cousin, provided that May Davenant cared to subdue him. And how make her care? A great passion, Karina had read in her French authors, is only a slight one thwarted by a great difficulty. Add jealousy to liking and the thing might be done. Whatever else was uncertain, it could not be doubted that May cared for Glanville more than she did for Tom Davenant. If she married her cousin, it would be from devotion to the name and ancient descent she had been taught to revere. Let her be infatuated about the artist, and her refusal of the cousinly hand would follow as a matter of course. Miss Valence had entered from the side-scene, therefore, just when she was wanted, and her cue, in the language of the drama, was 'green-eyed jealousy.' To promote that feeling in the breast of Lady May was now her cousin's dearest wish, her hourly and daily thought. The dress ball seemed to her an inspiration of some good genius. There would be much preparation, and at Trelingham a great deal of rehearsing —so to call it—with these original costumes, which would need to be carefully designed. And when the intimacy of the preparations had stung Lady May like a gadfly, the ball itself was to do the rest. She would see Rupert with Hippolyta. She would be mad with disappointment and jealousy, above all if her attention were directed that way; and when her feeling had reached that height—good-bye to Cousin Tom, concluded the Countess; he will speak only to be repulsed. Thus she thought, much musing; and the unconscious puppets fell into their places, and waited till she should pull the wires to begin their exhibition.

One point remained doubtful. Was there really anything between Hippolyta and the artist, and if so, how far had the attraction gone? To ascertain this was of the last importance. Too little would be as fatal as too much. Miss Valence went about in the most beautiful innocence,

quiet and composed, like one that had not a care in the world. When at Trelingham her bearing towards Rupert was cordial and friendly, but disarmed suspicion; and though the artist was often in the neighbourhood of Falside he never passed its threshold. The truth was that with Glanville's roaming habits and Hippolyta's constant ridings unattended at what hour and in which direction she pleased, these young lovers could afford to be on their good behaviour at the Court. They met under every variety of circumstance, and the romance of concealment added not a little to their passion. It was not, however, a very wicked way in them. Colonel Valence had taught his child that she must search into her heart, follow where it loved, and not fear the consequences. Though no reply had come to her letter, she knew he would consent. He must have got beyond the reach of correspondence, she fancied; that was all.

Not long after the ball had been determined on Miss Valence was surprised one afternoon to see the Countess Lutenieff ride up to Falside, enter the library, and ask her dear Hippolyta for a cup of tea. She was all smiles and graciousness, hoping she had not interrupted the interesting work in which Miss Valence was sure to be engaged; but the lovely air and the absence of Lady May, who was visiting some distant friends for some few days, had tempted her to ride over the moor for a *tête-à-tête*, which she knew would be delightful. Hippolyta put away her books and papers, made her visitor welcome, and submitted to her fate. She was quick enough to perceive that Karina had laid her plan for an afternoon's talk, but on what subject or to what end, in so flighty a creature, it was impossible to conjecture. They sat by the open window, which was a bower of exquisite creepers, and looked down the valley over green meadows and cornfields where the blade was springing. Hippolyta waited and wondered. But the purpose which had brought Karina still lay hidden, sharp and cruel as it was, like the sword of Harmodius wreathed in myrtle. She touched many flowers of talk with her light wings, flitted up and down from art to social systems, from women to their dressmakers and the last new thing in

female frippery, coming nearer and nearer to the point she had in view, sweeping round it in circles that ever grew narrower. She could be wily and indirect when she chose, although much of her ordinary conversation had the malicious naïveté of a precocious child's. And thus, without quite knowing how they came to it, Hippolyta found herself discussing Lady May's opinions on the subject of marriage and her probable destiny. Nothing could be less reserved or affected than the Countess while speaking of her cousin. 'And oh, my dear,' she said, 'I thought how providential it was, the other day, that you gave us your own romantic views—delightful I call them—when May was by to hear you. It will, it must, I am sure, have done her good.'

'In what way?' inquired Hippolyta, languidly. She did not want these sentimental confidences, especially with the Countess.

'Ah, you know, a word in season does so much good. You were warning my cousin against a temptation which, with her present ways of looking at things, might well prove too much for her.'

'Indeed!' said Hippolyta. She would not encourage the Countess.

'Yes, indeed,' answered the other eagerly; 'no less than to make a real *marriage de convenance* where affection would have no share, to sacrifice a consuming passion to interest, or at any rate to opinion. You spoke so beautifully of obeying the impulse of the feelings. I am sure she agreed with you. Do you remember how little she seemed surprised by what were certainly bold views?'

'Yes,' said Hippolyta, feeling uncomfortable, though she could not say why. What was all this about? Had she any interest in it? She must know more. 'A consuming passion,' she said after a pause. 'That is very strong language. And have you been told who is the object of Lady May's devotion, or is it a secret?'

'I have not been told,' replied Karina; 'but to me it is no secret. What should you say to Mr. Glanville?'

Hippolyta's heart gave a great leap. The sword was out and had gone through her. 'Mr. Glanville?' she echoed under her breath. It was impossible to go on.

The Countess waited, like some savage beast that sees its victim fascinated at its own first spring from the thicket. But Hippolyta did not mean to let her secret escape. She took in her hand the cup of tea which she had laid down, and went on with an effort, 'Mr. Glanville,—I have nothing to say to Mr. Glanville. Do you mean that Lady May would accept an artist? Would it not be marrying beneath her?'

'I did not talk of marrying; I talked of a consuming passion. That is just the point. My cousin, if she held your principles, would insist on marrying Mr. Glanville, for she has been in love with him ever since he came to Trelingham, and he with her. But she is tempted to marry Mr. Davenant, who stands next in the succession to her father's title and estates.'

This was overwhelming. The sword now was rifling her heart, turning in the wound it had made. Hippolyta was no woman of the world, and her poor brave defence was nearly at an end. Rupert in love with Lady May! The room reeled about her; she could not speak; she was incapable of thinking. Karina sat still, conscience-stricken at the apparent success of her stratagem, but yet enjoying its success. She had in her that mixture of cruelty and remorse which plays so strange a part in the Russian temperament. She was disgusted with herself; but nothing in heaven or earth would have stayed her hand now. In this contest Hippolyta was not her match. A pause of some moments ensued, at the end of which Miss Valence in a low unsteady voice, which could scarcely be heard across the table, murmured, 'In love with one another! It is impossible. I do not believe it.'

'No; I daresay you are as much surprised as I was when it first dawned upon me. Not that Mr. Glanville is unworthy of my cousin's hand; far from it, he would do honour to any woman.' This was cunningly said, as a compliment, forcible though indirect, to Hippolyta's own discernment. 'But,' the Countess went on, 'if you had seen them, as I did, for weeks together, morning after morning in the picture-gallery, Lady May talking and Mr. Glanville looking at her, you would have no doubt on the subject.'

Karina forgot, apparently, how often she had left them alone and departed on her own errands.

'Of course he looked at her,' said Hippolyta with a melancholy smile; 'how else could he have painted her portrait?'

'Oh, but there is looking and looking. Moreover, they engaged in the most confidential talk, quite like old friends. You know how charming Mr. Glanville's conversation can be when he is in the vein.'

Ah, yes, she did know, too well for her peace. It was a dangerous gift that sudden vehement inspiration which made his tongue so eloquent, his imagination so vivid and original, after a long interval of silence or depression. She had observed that when Rupert was in the mood any listener would suffice; all he seemed to need was an audience. The explanation which he gave her one day was plausible, but did not take away the peril. He said that when a man has lived by himself as much as he had done in former years, the necessity for speech becomes from time to time imperious, and it matters not whose is the open ear into which it is poured. He had a whole chapter of curious illustrations to the point, adding merely that he still found himself holding forth to an audience of one without minding whether his silent *vis-à-vis* were taking in every word he said or falling asleep open-mouthed under its influence. But she was convinced that when he chose to speak his audience would not slumber. Lady May had been charmed; yes, why should she not? Before Karina spoke that idea had crossed her mind. But had Rupert been charmed in turn? How was she to find out; what was she to think? Could she ask this chattering, frivolous, mocking lady, who cared little what game her shafts brought down?

But there was no need to ask. Karina went on with her story, founded on fact as we know, but embellished and exaggerated until it seemed that Rupert might have been kneeling at Lady May's feet, in the guise of a troubadour, imploring her to have pity on a desponding lover. Hippolyta could say little in reply, nor dared to utter that little. If she spoke, she was betrayed. Her utmost effort only succeeded in casting a doubt on Karina's powers of obser-

vation. But the Countess was not to be shaken. 'Rely upon it, my dear Hippolyta,' she said, 'Lady May is devotedly attached to Mr. Glanville, and he was not unwilling to accept the incense she offered. Three months ago I should have said he was in love with her; and I still think it, although naturally the opportunities for its display are neither so frequent nor so favourable as they were. You, of course, may have surer grounds to go upon.'

'What do you mean?' said Hippolyta, resolved to withstand this prying. 'You do not suppose Lady May would give me a confidence which she seems not to have bestowed on you.' She spoke hotly and angrily.

'Now, my dear,' answered the Countess, 'you will frighten me if you look like that. I mean no harm. But you are such a friend of Mr. Glanville's, since the day you gave him shelter, that I fancied he might have spoken to you of his longings, aspirations, and so forth.'

'He has never said a word to me about Lady May,' answered Hippolyta, still angry and miserable. 'Why should he come to me about her?'

'Why, indeed? But men like to take advice sometimes from a woman they can trust. However, all this is wide of the mark. It is curious how one topic leads to a hundred. For, you see, we began by saying what an excellent thing it would be if your principles could become those of Lady May. She ought to marry Mr. Glanville——'

'She ought to do nothing of the kind,' said Hippolyta, irritated into expressing more than was prudent. 'Let her marry her cousin, according to the custom of her class, and her own convictions of duty.'

'What?' said the Countess, delighted to see the flame spreading and glowing so warm; 'surely you are inconsistent, Miss Valence. Would you not have her marry the man she loves?'

'Not if he does not love her.'

'But he does, I can assure you. Mr. Glanville has peculiar ways, like all his tribe. Nevertheless, observe them during the next few weeks when they are together, and you will be as convinced of it as I am. Dear, dear,' she said, rising at the last words, 'how quickly the afternoon passes

with a friend, especially one whose conversation is so engrossing! And the days are still short. Good-bye, my dear. Pray don't stir; I see you have much to do, if those piles of correspondence on the table are yours. May comes back the day after to-morrow, and you will be wanted, you know, to choose your Arthurian costume. *Good*-bye!'

She went off with a light step and a smile of triumph. Miss Valence would do her part. There was affection or ambition on her side, sufficient to make her an excellent rival—a Fair Rosamund to Lady May's Eleanor. The scheme promised admirably, and she sang little snatches of Russian or French ballads as she cantered along. Whether Hippolyta had been deeply wounded and might bleed to death she did not consider, nor did she care. She was fond of Miss Valence, in that selfish way which people have who like to see beautiful things about them; fond as she might have been of a lovely flower, or an Arab steed. But she had only one strong human feeling, and that was for no woman. She did mean to marry her cousin; and she would have immolated a thousand Hippolytas in one holocaust rather than give him up.

I will not say that she had roused the demon of jealousy in a heart so innocent, so little accustomed to seek itself or to indulge in malice and evil thoughts, as that of Hippolyta. So great a revolution was not to be accomplished in a day. But she had awakened her victim from a dream of childlike happiness, and, suddenly striking into the chords of her enchanted harp, had turned the music to harsh discords which went on sounding and jangling and would not be still. Colonel Valence had left his daughter without the usual safeguards of conventional religious training, and she had moved among the strange men and women that made her world, free as the weakest or the strongest of them, familiar with much more than the name of sin and moral degradation. For she had witnessed something of the misery upon which her father's damning argument against the society of to-day was founded. But, truly, as she declared to Lady May, her days had been spent without harm. She harboured no unbecoming thoughts; she was fearless and free; nor, until Rupert fixed his eyes upon her,

had she known what it was to care for any man save her father. The power of first love is proverbially intense; and when it comes at once, without warning, to a heart so large as Hippolyta's, and hitherto so self-contained, it has a depth of sacred purity, of kindling fire. Had *she* spoken of a consuming passion she would have been better justified than the Countess, who employed such words because they sounded romantic and startling, not for any well-assured knowledge that they were true of Lady May. The Spanish temperament, the unfettered life, the enthusiasm for things demanding sacrifice, the glamour of a devotion, sincere and expressive, on Rupert's side, must all be remembered, if we would calculate what elements there were for jealousy, watchfulness, and a perplexed yet irresistible love in Hippolyta. She did not doubt the man who had breathed out his soul in passionate utterances before her. Perish the thought, she cried, when it rose from the deeps of her anguish like a phantom and threatened to eclipse the light of heaven. She knew that he was loyal; but was there full security from the past, or had he so entangled himself in its consequences that he might not hope to be free? Most men had such a past; her books told her so, and she could bear to think of it with an equal mind, if the curtain which had fallen over it for Rupert was never to be raised again. But how, if Lady May interposed, if a claim there really was, or an old love with which to be off ere he could be on with the new? Hippolyta was devoted, but she was likewise proud and generous. She would not be Lady May's rival should it appear that Rupert, in whatever fashion, had given her a promise, or that his affection was divided. As she came to this resolution her heart sickened within her. She sat motionless, where the Countess had left her by the window, gazing with fixed and meditative eyes over the valley till the moon rose up in the cloudy sky, her hands clasped on her knees, while she thought and thought, and the slow tears began to well up from within and form on the tender eyelashes. She did not know where to look for help. A Christian maiden, she said half-unconsciously, would have prayed for guidance,—whatever prayer was. But she could only resolve to be true and trusting, impartial to Lady

May as to Rupert, and not unjust. It was a heavy burden for young shoulders, and the tears that fell at last were exceedingly bitter.

Her resolution, all this notwithstanding, held firm. She must ascertain the state of the case, and by that be guided. Until this afternoon she had given no assurance of attending the dress ball, which was a kind of entertainment alien from her feelings and characteristic of that social or aristocratic existence with which she could have so little in common. Rupert's pleadings even had not overcome her dislike to it; and the Countess, for all her zeal in the good cause, was obliged to be content with a very conditional acceptance. Now, however, she would take the *rôle* offered her and appear among the rest. Their frequent meetings, if she studied them with her eyes open, must surely betray the relation in which Rupert stood to Lord Trelingham's daughter. And if when the birthnight festivities were come her mind was not clear, she would ask Glanville the question, cost what struggling and shame it might. False, no, he was not false. It was easy for a man to be imprudent, but impossible that Rupert did not mean every word he had whispered in her ear. Great as was her trouble, so new and unexpected that it quite overcame her for days together, it left in the depths of her being an assured trust that love had answered love between them twain.

As soon as she dared, that is to say when her self-control was somewhat restored, she went over to Trelingham. Lady May had come back, bringing with her Mrs. Davenant, the well-known fashionable personage who called Tom her son, and expected from him a son's devotion, though she could not give up the world so far as to make Foxholme the pleasant place it should have proved to that amiable young man. She and Lord Trelingham, though of course very old acquaintance, had never got beyond the first stage of intimacy, while Lady May, to whom the frivolities of fashion were odious, was merely civil to her and did not see her more than twice in a season. She had come now to preside over the arrangements for keeping Tom's birthday and issue the much-coveted invitations which were to gather a numerous party at Trelingham. She, also, was

asking herself whether her son had serious thoughts of marrying his cousin; and it was part of her endeavouring just now to find out the way he had spent these months in the country, with Lady May on the one side and Madame de Lutenieff on the other. For though Tom was an affectionate son he wrote seldom, and there was that in Mrs. Davenant's character which forbade him to let her see into his heart. There could be no real confidence between persons so unlike, however attached they might be to one another. Tom felt more comfortable at Trelingham than he had ever been under his own roof. He loved his guardian, the Earl, with a simple but earnest devotion, which had increased as the boy grew to man's estate; and he looked forward to being perfectly happy with him and Lady May, if the latter would consent to be his wife. He knew she was infinitely beyond him in cleverness and knowledge of the world; but, if anything, he was attracted rather than repelled by that circumstance. A stupid man, he argued, ought to have a clever wife who would keep him from blundering. He did not think himself unequal to the duties of a country gentleman; but, should he become Earl of Trelingham, there would be Parliament and the burden of society, and who could help him so well as Lady May?

That he would succeed his cousin if he outlived him was as certain as anything in this world. Lord Trelingham had assured him of it in so many words. It was a piece of eccentric generosity, perhaps of unnecessary frankness. But he had acted towards Tom Davenant during the last five or six years as he would have acted towards his own son; and it was in keeping with the rest of his conduct to give up Trelingham Court to the festivities which must otherwise have taken place at Foxholme.

The house party would be numerous, and was already gathering when Hippolyta called after her sad visit from the Countess. She went through her introduction to Mrs. Davenant without flinching, but was glad to escape into the Great Hall, where a kind of rehearsal for the tableaux was in course of arrangement. Rupert, who had not been able to go near Falside for several days, came to her as soon as she had exchanged a word with Lady May, and was so

struck on observing her paleness and the dark rings round her eyes that he could think of nothing else. He drew her away, under pretence of showing her the dresses from which she was to choose, and in low passionate undertones implored her to tell him what was the matter. She could not mistake the feeling in his voice; it was that of the most devoted love. Her spirits revived; and, though she put him off with unmeaning answers, there was enough to cheer him in her assurance that she should soon be well. He looked at her with tender anxiety; he saw that something must have happened. But she had secrets which it did not become him to pry into; her troubles might be connected with Colonel Valence's numerous projects, and were not to be removed even by a lover's assiduity. However, he would not quit her side till she insisted on it; and his frequent glances towards her revealed a preoccupation which the Countess was delighted to behold, and which, in her careless infantine way, she pointed out to her cousin. Lady May was in her most difficult mood, irritated by the presence of Mrs. Davenant at Trelingham, dissatisfied with Rupert, and not at peace in her own mind. She had not conceived any great affection for Hippolyta; but now, under the Countess's malicious guidance, she saw, or thought she saw, enough to justify dislike and suspicion. Was Glanville bestowing elsewhere the love she had striven so desperately to win? It made her wretched when Miss Valence came near him, when he spoke to her in seeming confidence, when he showed how she must wear the elfin array in which he proposed to deck the Queen of Fairyland, as he smilingly called her. She was to be the Lady of the Lake.

All this reacted, according to Karina's deep-laid plan, on the feelings of Hippolyta. She, too, was made wretched; for Lady May, resolved on having her will, found means to engage Rupert's attention, and gave him so many commissions, had such a variety of questions to ask and possibilities to provide for, that the lovers, after their first greeting, met again only for an instant that afternoon. Time was when, if any one had charged May Davenant with being an adept in the arts of jealousy, she would have

turned a scornful eye upon the speaker and bade him begone with a proud consciousness of her innocence. Nor am I saying now that she was mean or malevolent; she was passionate and had forgotten herself, that was all. But was it not a sad falling away on the part of that lofty spirit? Hippolyta, struck through with Karina's fiery shaft, suffered and was helpless. She had no arts to counteract the imperious charm of the Earl's daughter; and when she beheld Rupert's embarrassment, how he resisted in vain, nor would look steadily in the face of Lady May, she began to fear that an entanglement really existed, and went home more miserable than she came. Certainly, she might have demanded an explanation from Rupert, and one word would have sufficed to scatter the clouds in her heaven. But it was not the time; she dreaded an explosion which must have blasted all her hopes, or sent him from Trelingham at this unseasonable moment. The play was to be played out. She took her part bravely; but as the days went on she became more and more resolute in the thoughts which had begun to ferment within her.

That afternoon was a sample of those which followed. Rupert, engaged from morning till night, and often in Lady May's company, had less time than usual to spend with Hippolyta, and none to mark that her dejection was profound and her paleness increasing. To mark, I say; for he felt that there was a vague misunderstanding between them, which he meant, as soon as the festival would let him, to have thoroughly cleared up. Lady May, however, was his greatest trial. The intimacy that had so happily fallen through seemed reviving again, and with it a sense of the magnetic danger, so to speak, which had compassed him round about in the picture-gallery. When Hippolyta was present he felt it less; but then another peril awaited him, for he did not choose that his old sin should be ever staring him in the face, and yet it did. Certain confidential allusions, slight yet speaking glances which might signify nothing in Lady May, but were embarrassing to him, and a demeanour in which friendliness might have the greater share, yet love not be wholly wanting,—he could no more define these things to himself than he could photograph

the wind, but he knew that it was not imagination which led him to fear them as the harbingers of catastrophe. What if Hippolyta should notice them too? He anathematised the folly of six months ago, his weakness when he ought to have been proof against this contagious sentiment. He would certainly at the very earliest quit Trelingham under one pretext or another, and put a solid interval of time between the painting of the Madonna with its mischievous associations and the work he had yet to do. There must be an end of this phantasmal coquetry, this mock sun of love which shone over against the true, and perplexed observers. He little knew the forces against which he was contending.

And so, amid fears and hopes and the strong resolutions of those upon whom fortune had laid the burden of a deadly struggle, Tom Davenant's birthday came. The house was full of guests; the Chase was thrown open, and the solemn early dinner appointed at which the Earl's tenantry were to hear their future lord deliver his maiden speech. The bright spring weather, dashed with a shower of rain, was all that could be wished; and if I do not dwell upon the events of the day, it is not because they deserved no sacred poet, but that one who knew how to adorn his grateful task with flowers of rhetoric to which I may not pretend, has already written of them in the *County Chronicle*, to the files of which I refer inquiring friends. For I must hasten to the evening, when a more select, but hardly less numerous, company was assembled in the Great Hall, and the *tableaux vivants* were beginning.

Hippolyta, who had accepted Madame de Lutenieff as her chaperon in default of another, descended from her room with beating heart, and was glad to find herself only just in time for her share in the representations. The Countess led her at once to the sort of green-room where the members of the first group were putting themselves in order. A stage had been erected at the end of the Great Hall, opposite the chief entrance. In front of it hung the ample folds of a curtain which was to draw up to the sound of music, when the tableau was arranged and the signal given. The scenes were to be presented at intervals, and

to last only so long as might be required to take in their meaning and to distinguish the characters which made them up, for anything like a sensible interruption of the dancing was not proposed, and would have been received with scant favour. Rupert had advised that the grouping should follow the order of his frescoes, including some which were only among his drawings, but not as yet visible on the walls. Thus it began with the Finding of Arthur, when, in the great temple, he draws out of the stone the miraculous sword which has resisted the efforts of all pretenders to the crown of Britain. Tom Davenant, with his exquisite beauty of face and manly form, was the very model of a young hèro, and not unnaturally had been compelled, against his will, to put on the trappings of Arthur. A crowd of knights occupied the foreground, behind them rose the dim pillars and vast recesses of a rude cathedral, and near the semblance of an altar stood Hippolyta, the Lady of the Lake, who was Arthur's fairy godmother, in converse with the mysterious enchanter, Merlin. When they were all in their places a silver bell rang, and the curtain drew up.

It was a striking scene and called forth instant applause, which was hushed when the orchestra, composed of harps and flutes, began above the great entrance a shrill weird music to celebrate the coming of the King. It was Lady May who had devised this wild welcome, so unlike the harmonies of the modern muse, but for that reason symbolic of far-off ages when the appeal was to elementary passions rather than to a complex temperament like ours of to-day. The effect was strange but overpowering. While it lasted, Hippolyta, who had not ventured to lift her eyes at the beginning, looked up and saw the vast spaces before her filled with a motley crowd, in all manner of fantastic and glittering attire, while a flood of golden light fell upon them from the sides of the hall, where Rupert's grandly-conceived frescoes, marking out the whole extent they were by and by to cover, added an air of indescribable solemnity and antique grandeur to the vision. Never in her life had she beheld anything so beautiful. It dazzled and excited her; it gave her a larger sense of existence, palpitating with joy

and passion. She could have been content, she thought, to gaze at it without going nearer. But in a few moments the music ceased, the curtain fell, and the Arthurian group, disappearing through the side-scene, was lost in the crowd below. She gave herself into the hands of the Countess and followed. The ball began; and Hippolyta, with mingled pleasure and dismay, found herself dancing with Rupert, who had instantly claimed her hand.

What she saw and experienced that evening, thanks to the novelty of her sensations, the secluded life she had led, the love which was filling heart and brain, the trouble of an uncertain future, and her joy in Rupert's triumph, it is not easy to describe. It was a whirl of excitement when time seemed short as a lightning flash, yet every moment eternal. The pauses in the dance, the bursts of barbaric music coming between, the delicate strange colours which had been so subtly combined in the grouping, the gleam of saffron and gold, of shining battle-axe and linked armour of steel, the perfume of tropical flowers which hung upon the atmosphere and penetrated her being, the steady blaze of light overhead, the sparkling of precious stones and waving of feathers and soft dark jets of velvet sheen, the sound of bubbling fountains in the conservatories which opened out of the ballroom into the garden beyond,—all this was mingled with laughing voices, with the play of outspread fans, and the movement of a multitude in whose eyes the light and the passion seemed to be reflected and to shine out again more intensely. It was a sea of life on whose waves, to the sound of enchanting music, she floated along. Sometimes Rupert held her hand, sometimes another whom she had never seen, to whom she spoke in dreamy whispers, not knowing what had been said to her. Out of the crowd a face surged up and gazed across inquiringly, as though seeking an answer in her eyes; but it was gone ere she could catch her breath and murmur, 'That was Lady May; what does she desire of me?' Or again, it was the Countess smiling cold, inquisitive, mocking, as her voice floated over her shoulder and bade her rest a while in the shade of the cool ferns. And Rupert, where was he? She looked round in a vague, sweet trouble, and saw him leading out

Lady May, whose earnest eyes seemed full of a steady fire. Could she not warn him, not rescue him from the danger? No, he was a thousand leagues away, and her hand could never reach him. As these thoughts came to darken the festival her heart beat faster with a sense of unspeakable love and pity. She felt that Rupert was all the world to her, that she could not live except in the sunshine of his presence, that to surrender him would be death.

But her meditations were again and again interrupted as one after the other of these brilliant masqueraders came up to solicit the honour of dancing with her. Hippolyta was so wrapt in her passionate griefs and longings that she did not realise the impression she was making in that unknown realm, where faces, voices, manners, were all novel and strange. Miss Valence's name was whispered from mouth to mouth; her father's story, so much of it as the public knew, was rehearsed again. Some, who had heard only of the marriage with Lady Alice, imagined that this was a niece of Lord Trelingham, now publicly adopted by him; and they wondered whether Tom Davenant would select her or Lady May for his bride. Others felt her beauty enhanced by the uncertain tales of her origin, for no one in that country-side had ever set eyes on her mother or could tell who she was. And the young men declared with enthusiasm that they had never seen such dancing. It was the perfection of unconscious grace, without effort or affectation; the true Spanish gravity with a world of passion in it; the movements, slow or swift, as the music demanded, always under control, not wild, but exquisitely self-contained. That evening Hippolyta and the Lady of the Lake melted into one lovely lissom figure, clad in a floating vestment of dark fairy-green, with golden hair falling down over the collar of wrought flowers which left the delicate throat bare, while a wreath of some strange bloom that resembled hyacinths decked the beautiful head, and gave her the look of sylvan majesty that befitted her in the legend. Nor had the warm paleness of her cheek, the light in her large, soft eyes, ever charmed the heart of Rupert as they did during those hours of dance and thrilling music. He could not turn his gaze

from her; but it seemed to him that she did not always return it. Was she lost in the pleasure of the scene? He quitted the company among which he was standing, and came, on the pretence that she was wanted for the next tableau, and spoke to her. She answered like one whose fancy was roaming abroad; she was absent and preoccupied. When they entered the green-room to make some slight changes in her outward adornment which the tableau required, she did all in silence, as she was bid, not turning at the voice that spoke or appearing to distinguish the speaker. She took her place in the group of Launcelot and Guinevere, fixing her eyes, but yet absently, on Lady May, who bore with exceeding stateliness the character of the guilty Queen. Again, at the side of the painted forest, she looked on while the Countess Lutenieff, as the fay Vivien, charmed his secret out of Merlin; and her feeling was that, in the old white-bearded man, to her a stranger, who enacted the magician's part, she beheld Rupert yielding to the witchery of a maiden he did not love. When, from the floor of the Great Hall, she watched the scene of Tristram and Iseult, in which Lady May and the artist quaffed the love-philter which was to bind them in unfaithfulness,—a weird and powerful representation that stirred the spectators to demand it a second time,—she could hardly refrain from crying aloud, and the effort made her weak to fainting. She leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes to shut out the displeasing vision. But it would not leave her; it was still there in vivid colour as on the stage, Iseult holding forth the enchanted golden cup, and Tristram in the glow of his beauty and strength bending over it, his lips touching the beaker's brim that was to take away his reason for ever. The plaudits which rang through the hall, and were drowned in the strains of music overhead, piercing like the sea-bird's scream and dying off as into the wash of a sullen sea, made a tumult within her which left no room for thought, which stamped upon her memory an impression that must be indelible, and urged her to resolve her doubts at once, without hesitation. She watched till Rupert came into the throng once more. He was moving her way, and their eyes met. In an instant he was by her

side. 'You must ask me to dance,' she whispered, and ere long they were moving in the waltz.

Her dream came back: she was floating on the waves of life to the sound of a mighty music; its single tones shot through her like silvery arrows, its complex strains lifted her upon the thunderous roll of waters away and away, with Rupert, the only tenant of her universe, holding her fast. He belonged to her alone, and she was of another sphere than the multitude moving in cadence around them. Still, she did not speak. And lo! the sudden vibration of a string which, for no more than a second, was heard through the music like a note of lamentation, turned her thoughts and her fancy. She beheld the world of suffering beneath the world of joy: on the barren shores lapped by these smiling waters an innumerable multitude were gathered from the four winds—all the poverty-stricken, the wretched, the homeless, the tear-besprent, the naked misery of those who crowded against one another to keep themselves warm, and who were reckoned by millions upon millions. She saw them clearly, with the mind's eye, too humbled and cast down to envy the joy they might not share, benumbed in their great misery by the sense of a long despair even more than by frost and cold. The masquerade of life was for the few; its bitter dismal reality, not tempered by dance or song, for the many. And what was she doing, Hippolyta, amid these splendours? Her place was not there, but with her brothers and sisters pining in wretchedness. She awoke from the excitement of the evening with a start. The air was suffocating, the perfume of these flowers delirious. She could endure it no longer. 'Take me away,' she said to Rupert as the dance was ending; 'I want the fresh air; I shall faint if I stay in the room.'

He looked round for the nearest exit, and, with Hippolyta on his arm, moved as swiftly as the crowd would let him towards the conservatories, which opened on either side of the stage into the garden. It would be cooler there. They arrived at a spot where great cactus-like plants, mingled with creepers, stood up in the moonlight which shone through the glass roof with a cold, uncertain gleam. There was no one near. The feeling of comparative solitude

refreshed Hippolyta; and her thoughts began to take a definite shape. Rupert inquired tenderly whether she were better. She smiled, and did not speak for a little while; then, drawing him close to the window where the plants screened them, she said, laying her hand on his breast, 'Rupert, were you ever in love with Lady May?'

The question startled him. 'Ah,' he said to himself, 'it has come at last.' But he would be perfectly open. 'No, Hippolyta,' he answered, 'never; but, before I met you, I might have been. For a few weeks I thought even that I was.'

'Did you tell her your thoughts?' she asked. She felt an immense relief.

'Never,' he replied; 'had I spoken it would have been to Lord Trelingham.'

'Then you are quite free as regards Lady May; you have incurred no obligation towards her?'

Rupert, who had not expected this home thrust, turned red and pale. 'I will leave you to judge,' he answered, though not immediately; 'obligation of any palpable sort there is none. I have made neither speeches nor advances to her; but I have shown perhaps more sympathy when she spoke—it is now five months or more—than was prudent, since I did not love her.' He tried to explain. Hippolyta did not interrupt him. It was difficult to enlarge on the behaviour of Lady May without attributing to her thoughts of which he had no evidence.

When he came to a pause, Hippolyta, still looking at him, put a single question. 'Tell me, Rupert,' she said, 'do you think Lady May cared for you as I do?'

'As you do,' he repeated with fervour; 'ah, Hippolyta, who is like you in anything? I do not know; it is nothing to me what Lady May's feelings have been. You do not distrust me?' he went on anxiously; 'have I said or done anything to displease you?'

'No,' she answered simply; 'you are the same as ever. But suppose she did love you, could you always resist, always remember Hippolyta?'

'I see,' he said, 'you are troubled about it. Very well, I cannot blame a jealousy which comes of so great affection. Look here, Hippolyta, I also have been disquieted and not

happy in this strange position; for, though I do not know what she feels, I have an uneasy dread that all may not turn out well. I had made up my mind to leave Trelingham for a month or six weeks, that there might be a break and a fresh start under less difficult circumstances. If you wish I will go to-morrow.'

'Are you not wanted here during the festivities?' she inquired.

'Not in any way. My work is done when the last of the tableaux has been given.'

Hippolyta, instead of answering, seemed lost in thought. Turning away, she walked two or three steps and stood apart, her eyes fixed on the waters of a mimic fountain which cast its spray around. What was she thinking about? Rupert did not dare to interrupt her. At length she came back, and, with an earnest, troubled expression, said to him, 'Go to-morrow, as you propose; it will be best. Only let me hear from you, and if I have anything to write,—you must give me your address.'

He put his hand to his pocket. There was no card in it. Tearing out one of his ivory tablets, he wrote a line or two in haste and handed them to Hippolyta. 'Write to my studio,' he said; 'I shall be there oftener than at home, almost every day, in fact; and there will be less chance of discovery. But I shall be glad,' he went on, 'when you allow me to end this concealment. It is a trial to both of us.'

'Yes,' she replied in her preoccupied manner, and said no more.

The crashing sound of trumpet-music came to them where they stood. 'We must return to the ballroom,' said Rupert; 'I shall be wanted for the next grouping.'

The words were hardly out of his mouth when they saw the Countess approaching, leaning on the arm of a cavalier. She addressed Hippolyta. 'My dear Miss Valence,' she said, 'I have been looking for you this quarter of an hour. Here is a message from Falside which I have undertaken to deliver. I hope it is nothing unpleasant.' She held out her hand as she spoke, and Hippolyta grasped the note that was in it.

'My father's writing,' she said, as the superscription caught her eye. She opened it and moved towards the light. The others waited. It was a very brief message apparently, for she had read it through in an instant, and turning to Rupert, said, 'I must go home at once. My father is there, and thinks he may have only a few hours with me.' She stopped as if uncertain, looked from the Countess to Rupert and back again; but Karina would not move. It was impossible to say a word more, to bid the artist stay till she had seen her father, or go as they had arranged previously. The note was urgent. Andres had come with the pony-chaise, and she must leave the future to chance. 'Good-bye, Mr. Glanville,' she said. 'You will have to invent a lady of the lake for the Passing of Arthur,' and she offered him her hand, which he clasped fervently. But he would accompany her to the door. Madame de Lutenieff went likewise. They were fated not to speak in private, it seemed. Messages were left for the Earl and Lady May; a second time their hands joined; Karina gaily waved her fan, and the carriage drove off into the moonlight night.

In less than twenty-four hours Rupert, convinced that safety lay in flight, had left Trelingham and returned to his house in town. He could wait there for news of Hippolyta.

CHAPTER XX

WAS NOT THIS LOVE INDEED?

BUT a week passed, and no news came. Rupert, who had never been in love till he saw Hippolyta, and had felt that she was always near him at Falside, now discovered with joy and amazement, which gradually turned to unmixed pain, how closely she had been knit to his heart-strings. Her image was before him day and night; he consumed long hours in adding to her portrait—which of course he had brought with him—the touches that were to make it, not perfect, but less unlike the cherished original. He brooded over the words, the looks, the little loving tokens which had assured him of her affection. And he would have given worlds to see her again as on the night when, laying her hand on his breast, she asked him whether he thought that Lady May loved him as she did. But these things did not atone for her absence; they could not fill up the void. A sense of exile weighed upon him; and when these first days were over, but for very shame he would have gone back to Trelingham. He thought of writing; but ought not her silence to be respected? She would hear that he had kept his word, and for the present it must suffice. He would not intrude on her privacy while Colonel Valence was at home. The resolution cost him an effort, which only ceaseless riding in the less-frequented outskirts of London, and desperate attempts at reading all manner of hard books in his studio, could support. Painting, except the touches above mentioned, was out of the question. He had not certified friends of his arrival, nor did he go near a club; his accustomed haunts were left

unvisited, and he went hither and thither, like the ghost of Rupert Glanville, speaking to no one, taking no interest in the movement around him, or in the press and throng of the London season, which was now at its height. Not a soul, except the aged woman that took charge of his studio, and the housekeeper who presided over his establishment, knew that he was extant among the millions of the great city.

It had lasted more than a week, and Rupert, on a certain evening, was walking down the long dreary road, bordered with commonplace shops, the line of which was occasionally broken by melancholy-looking private houses, that led in the direction of Fulham, where his studio lay. The dinner-hour was past, and he thought of dining *extempore*, as his aged female called it, in front of Hippolyta's picture, which was hanging on the easel. Then he would smoke a cigarette, and read or dream before the fire according to his feelings. It had been a chill day with much rain and wind. The clouds seemed to draw the night after them, and as he walked on, tired and dispirited, Rupert said to himself that he could not hold out longer, and he would write to Falside on the morrow. He wished there had been a star or two in the sky; it was one great blackness in front of him, and when he turned round to survey the road by which he had come, the dull flare of London shooting up into the heavens struck him as more dismal even than the darkness. He came to the lodge that formed an entrance to his studio, and seeing no one within, passed on and up the steps at the end of the narrow garden-path which led to it. He had the key in his pocket; but on trying it found the door unlocked. He entered, pushed aside the curtain which hung over it, saw candles lighted on the table, a fire burning bright on the hearth and sending a welcome glow through the apartment, and, rising from his favourite easy-chair—Hippolyta.

He could not believe his eyes. 'What!' he cried, 'you here, Hippolyta, darling? I am mad or dreaming.' He ran to clasp her in his arms. She drew back, but gave him her hand with a smile. He was all amaze.

'No, you are neither mad nor dreaming, Rupert,' she

said quietly; 'it is Hippolyta, and I thought you would never come.'

'But you did not write, you sent me no word of your visit,' he cried; 'how could I imagine it? When did you arrive? Have you had anything to eat? What can I get for you?'

She sat down again, and motioned him to a seat near the easel. 'Be quiet,' she answered; 'what an excitable person you are! I have dined, and do not want anything except a cup of tea, which I will make by and by for both of us. You look tired, Rupert, where have you been spending the day?'

'Oh, I don't know,' he replied; 'it matters not. But are you staying in town? or how is it you come so suddenly?'

'I think you must have your tea first,' she said, 'and then we will talk about it. At present not a word more.' And she threw off her cloak and began to search for the tea things.

'You must let me help you,' said Rupert, his spirits wonderfully revived at the beautiful apparition. 'You cannot guess the geography of this place.' Accordingly, they were soon opening cupboards, bringing out the curious old bits of china in which Rupert took a certain pride, and, it must be confessed, getting a great deal in each other's way. At last Hippolyta insisted on his sitting down where she bade him, and herself arranged the low table in front of the fire. It was a cosy scene. The light played here and there on the quaint cups and saucers, brought out the gleam of the silver, and showed pictures, statuettes of marble, heavy crimson draperies, and the confused mingling of carved woodwork, half-theatrical costumes, vases of flowers, painters' lay-figures, and pieces of shining armour, which made up the *ensemble* of Rupert's abode. Sitting there with the dark night about them, the rich folds of crimson drooping to the floor, amid a stillness hardly broken by the far-off murmur of the London streets, Rupert and Hippolyta might have fancied themselves in a world from which reality was shut out. He said to her, 'We have never been so much to ourselves as now. How still the night is! Can you imagine that London is at the door?'

'You are right,' said Hippolyta. 'We were not so much alone the first evening I saw you, when you dined at Eulside. Do you remember the stillness then? But the thought of an immense city near heightens it. Ah, that first meeting! I suppose you are confident even now that you cared for Hippolyta as soon as you set eyes on her?'

'Confident!' cried Rupert; 'I know it, and so do you, although you pretend not.'

'And what of my feelings?' she asked mischievously. 'You would not, of course, allow them such a capacity for enthusiasm? You believe that I waited until you spoke, and then gracefully yielded.'

'Why, Hippolyta,' he said with emotion, 'I should never dream that there was anything in me to call out enthusiasm. You must not drive me wild with happiness.' His countenance glowed as he reflected on what she had suggested.

She went on. 'But you are aware that I believe in the equality of the sexes; therefore, if I like, I can suppose a woman's love to be as fervent and lasting as a man's. Nay, there may be love at first sight in us too, weak as we are.'

'Do you mean, Hippolyta, that when you told me your name at the chalet you were as much moved as I was?'

'Would you scorn me if I said so? Well, Rupert, I want you to be sure of this—when our eyes met for the first time our fate was decided.'

He looked at her in great surprise, as well as delight. There was a meaning in her words that he had yet to unravel. She spoke in clear firm tones, but her eyes were fixed on the ground.

'You are an extraordinary woman,' he said, 'and you have your own way of captivating a poor fellow. If you did, indeed, care for me as much as I did for you from the hour of our meeting, it is plain that we were intended for one another. And so we are. Nothing can separate us.'

'Dear Rupert,' she said, 'you asked me why I came. Let me tell you. But promise that you will hear me to the end and express no feeling one way or the other till I have said my last word. A woman's last word,' she went on,

smiling for a moment, 'you think it will be long in coming. But no, it is a short story. Do you promise?'

He did not know what to make of her. 'I promise, surely,' he said.

She folded her hands over her knees in a favourite attitude of hers, and lifted her eyes steadily to Rupert's face. He could not help feeling excited, but he kept still.

'I must begin,' she said, 'with what happened after you left Trelingham. I could not speak to you in the Countess's hearing, or I should have begged you to wait another day. It was possible that my father would wish to see you. However, you had given me your promise, and I was not surprised on hearing that you had gone. I learned it only three days after, when my father bade me farewell and I was able to call at Trelingham. They were three busy days; and you will perhaps forgive me if, in the joy of seeing my father again, I put off, or rather could find no time to write the note I intended. We had so many things to settle. I told him our story. He knows all about you; likes you, I think, and said I must please myself. As for him, the summons he had been expecting for months had come at last. He was allowed only the necessary time to put his affairs in order and to say good-bye. I do not know whither he has gone. All I know is that he will have to run the extremest risk. I must be resigned, he said, if I never see him again. It is hard, Rupert, is it not?'

She was too much affected to go on. Rupert looked at her with pitying eyes. 'Is there no remedy?' he inquired. 'Could you not persuade your father to renounce the enterprise?'

'Oh, impossible,' she said; 'I know him too well. When he decides that a duty lies before him he will go through fire and water; there is no holding him back. I did not venture on a word of dissuasion; but I said, as he was going, "And so, father, you leave me alone in the world." I could not forbear saying that. But he kissed me, and answered, "You will not be alone if Mr. Glanville is true," and without a word more he left me. Hush, you are going to speak and to violate your pledge. No, Rupert, wait. This is not the end of my story.

'I felt miserable indeed when he was gone. Towards evening the cottage looked so desolate that I resolved to avail myself of Lord Trelingham's hospitality, and occupy the room which he calls mine, the dear old man. It was dark when I arrived, and the place looked strangely quiet after the brilliant spectacle of the birthday festivities, the dress ball, and the *tableaux vivants*. The music of the dance had been ringing in my ears incessantly till I entered the vestibule; but there, under the sudden conviction that it was all over, that it had gone like a vision of the night, it seemed to stop. I felt that you were gone. Would not an instinct have drawn you from your upper chamber, brought you from the chalet, had you been there and Hippolyta at the door? Ah yes, Rupert, you love this poor foolish maiden, and she loves you, I think. So they came out and made me welcome, and told me of the pleasures I had missed by going home; and that you, to their astonishment, had not stayed out the festivities, but had been hurried away on they knew not what business to London. And then they praised the tableaux, and we were deep all that evening in questions of Celtic poetry and the significance of the San Greal. Lord Trelingham asked me when my father would come again. I told him I did not know; that all was uncertain with him and consequently with me, but, as the truth was, that he had been pleased on hearing of my new life among these kind friends, and especially that I had witnessed the glories of the coming of age.

'The change and stir were good for me. I could not have borne the solitude of Falside. But I was haunted by a vague suspicion that Lady May, who is the least friendly of them all, had looked at me askance, perhaps because she imputed to my interference your leaving the Court. I could not tell, and I did not think much of it. Next morning, as I was sitting by the window where you found me that day, —you have not forgotten?—it struck me as extraordinary that there was not one of the family to be seen. Where could they all be? They had left me after breakfast and scattered as usual; but the long absence from the morning-room was not usual, at least when I happened to be staying in the house. I began to think what it might mean.

Towards one o'clock, however, the Countess ran hastily in, [illegible] you know her way—without preface or preliminary, threw her arms about my neck, kissed me in a sort of rapture, and cried out, "Wish me joy, my dear, she has refused him." I was bewildered. "She—who?" I asked. "Refused whom?" The Countess did not leave me in doubt. "May has refused my Cousin Tom," she said, and danced down the room in wild excitement.'

Rupert gave an exclamation of surprise. He remembered the fragment of conversation he had heard, when walking on the front terrace, between the Countess and Lady May. The words came back to him as they had been uttered by Karina, 'Well, then, if you do not care for him, you ought to refuse him.' Had Tom Davenant proposed to the Earl's daughter? He put the question to Hippolyta.

'You shall hear,' she answered. 'When I could get the Countess to be still and sit down like a reasonable creature, she began, without pressing, to explain the events of the morning. She had been aware, for some time, that a crisis was at hand. Every one knows, and indeed she is not by way of making it a secret, that she wishes to marry Mr. Davenant. She told me as much herself at the outset. But it appears that Mr. Davenant some two years ago made a formal offer of marriage to Lady May through her father. The Earl did not consider it necessary to tell his daughter then, and insisted on her cousin's silence till he came of age. But the young man adhered to his resolution. At the earliest moment he could, when all the guests, including his mother, had left Trelingham, he went to the Earl and renewed his proposal. What passed between them nobody of course can tell. Karina, who never quitted her Cousin Tom's footsteps during those days, saw him enter the library, and half an hour afterwards heard Lord Trelingham ring his bell. She was still watching when the servant who answered it went off again to Lady May's room, and the latter came downstairs—looking very much concerned, said Karina—and knocked at the library door. It opened, Lady May went in; and the Countess, steady at her post, heard a murmur of voices, one of which by degrees

became loud and firm. The conference lasted not very long; and Karina, fearful of what might happen if she were discovered lingering so near, walked down the hall and stood by the entrance, pretending, as she told me, to be looking at the weather. She heard the door open again, and Lady May came with hasty footsteps along the hall. Karina turned as she drew near. Her cousin's face was hot and flushed; she looked angry. On seeing the Countess she paused, hesitated, and struck, as it would appear, with a sudden inspiration, walked over to her, and said, "Karina, you may marry Tom when you like. I will never marry him." These were her very words. "Have you told him so?" the Countess inquired. "I have told him in my father's presence; and now I hope there will be an end of this." Karina stayed to hear no more. She came on the instant to find me, whom she supposed to be in the morning-room; for, as she said, a joy that one cannot communicate is not worth having. And besides——.' Hippolyta looked about and stopped in her embarrassment. She did not see her way to continue.

'Yes,' said Rupert, 'and besides? What other reason had she?'

Hippolyta heaved a sigh. 'These are curious confessions to make,' she said. 'You must know then, Rupert, that the Countess wanted to thank *me* for my share in the transaction. My share? I asked her what it had been, and she told me. I felt ashamed while she spoke. That Russian lady was born to make mischief, as you will grant when I tell you about her.'

'I grant it already,' said the artist; 'she is cunning and unprincipled.'

'Cunning, certainly,' replied Hippolyta; and she rehearsed the conversation which had taken place at Falside between herself and Madame de Lutenieff, delivering, as she judged, to be expedient, a round unvarnished tale. Rupert was very angry; he saw now that his suspicions had been well founded. This woman would have set Hippolyta and Lady May at daggers drawn to achieve her purpose.

'She came to thank me,' said Hippolyta, almost in

tears, 'for the admirable way in which I had played my part and stirred Lady May to jealousy, not only during the week before the ball, but on that evening. My sudden departure, followed by yours next day, she called a master-stroke. I could hardly find words, but I assured her that it was pure accident which recalled me to Falside. "Accident or design," she replied, "it could not have happened better. My Cousin May has been ever since in a state of the deepest melancholy, and all idea of rewarding Mr. Davenant for his great kindness in proposing is at an end." I had nothing to remark on that point, and was silent. But she would not let me alone. She congratulated me on my philosophy, wished she were as detached from the world herself, and assured me I had done an excellent thing in helping Lady May to follow the path of affection. Her conclusion was, "She will now marry Mr. Glanville, and they will live happy ever after. And, my dear Hippolyta, it will have been all your doing." Oh, how can one woman stab another in this deliberate way!'

'Women of the world, as you call them, Hippolyta, are capable of everything,' said Rupert; 'they have no heart, or have gambled it away. And so, May Davenant is to marry me, whether I like it or no. I wonder what that lady herself thinks about it.'

'You will not wonder long; I am coming to that,' she answered very seriously. 'Karina had only just finished speaking when Lady May came in. I had often thought her a person of violent temper, but she was now in a state of excitement such as I had never witnessed. Her eyes blazed. "Karina," she said, "this is a matter on which the less secrecy is kept the better." And with that she turned to where I was sitting. "I dare say you have heard, Miss Valence, from my cousin here, what has just taken place?" I murmured assent. "Yes," she said, "it is true. I have refused Mr. Davenant once and for all. It is not, it shall not be a secret. You may mention it to whom you please. Mrs. Davenant will hear, no doubt, that the offer has been made, and then all the world will know of it." Karina interrupted her. "If it depends on Tom," she said,

"Mrs. Davenant will not be any the wiser. I am sure he will not tell her."—"Well, it is all one to me," said Lady May; "my cousin means well, but I am not going to be importuned. I will not stand in your way," she said to the Countess with a forced laugh. "Thank you so much," answered Karina in her mocking tone. "As I was telling Miss Valence, we shall read one of these days that a marriage has been arranged and will shortly take place between Lady May Davenant, only daughter of the Earl of Trelingham, and the distinguished artist, Mr. Rupert Glanville."

"You have been telling Miss Valence that?" exclaimed her cousin, drawing a step nearer. The Countess shrank away. "Well, why not?" she asked, still bent on making mischief. The reply seemed to stagger Lady May. "Why not?" she echoed absently. And then recovering herself, she looked straight into my eyes. "Would it make any difference to you, Miss Valence, if I did?" she asked in her loftiest manner. My heart sank within me. "You are the best judge of your own actions," I replied, showing as little feeling as I could. "Then you are not in love with Mr. Glanville?" was her question, full of mockery and malice. Karina looked on, amused. I rose; I would not wait to be further questioned. "Make my excuses, please, to Lord Trelingham," I said, "and allow me to wish you good-morning. This is the last time I shall trouble you, Lady May." I was going to the door when the Countess interposed. She begged me not to take offence; it was her fault, her cousin meant nothing. Lady May stood perfectly silent, and I thought would not speak. But she felt, I suppose, that she had been guilty of a breach of good manners, and that it was due to herself to tender an apology. When she saw I was bent on going, she stepped forward and begged my pardon. She had not meant to be rude. She was excited; would I forgive her? I thought of the Earl, who had been so kind to me, and how my departure at that moment would make a reconciliation between the families more impossible than ever. And if I went, would it not seem a confession that you and I——? In short, I did violence to myself and answered meekly.

But I could not stay, as they wished me, beyond the next few hours. My head ached, and I was, you may imagine how wretched. Mr. Davenant did not appear at luncheon. He was busy, the Earl said, preparing for his journey to Foxholme, where he had to meet the tenantry next day. The Countess was radiant, Lord Trelingham serious, Lady May sullen, like one that cannot forgive herself for seeming lowered in the eyes of a friend. I was glad to get home. I shall never, never visit Trelingham again.'

'Nor I,' said Glanville; 'I will acquaint Lord Trelingham by the next post that our engagement is ended. My poor darling, how you must have suffered!' He would have taken her hand; but Hippolyta, who had drawn closer to him in the excitement of her narrative, stood up, and walking towards the fireplace, said, with her eyes averted:

'But why did I not remain at home? You do not ask me that. Oh, no,' she exclaimed suddenly, 'give up your engagement at Trelingham you must not. Honour is honour.'

'It will be only paying a forfeit which I can well afford,' said Rupert, 'and I cannot look Lady May in the face again after her atrocious behaviour.'

'Yes, you can,' said Hippolyta, speaking in a wonderfully quiet tone.

'How is it possible?' he asked. 'Do you think I could go on living at the Court while you were in a kind of exile at Falside?'

'I shall not go back to Falside,' was her reply.

'What!' said Rupert, astonished; 'not go back? Have you any other plan? What is it? tell me.'

'Then be quiet, as you promised,' she said; and with great seriousness, always keeping her face averted, she went on, 'Why do you think I came here to-night? To inform you that Lady May had hurt my feelings? No, not exactly. When a girl like me has lost father and mother, when she is her own mistress, alone in the world, without any one to look to for light or guidance except the man she loves, what do you suppose she ought to do?' Her voice sank to a whisper as she ended.

Rupert sprang from his chair. 'My darling Hippolyta,' he cried, 'do you mean to say that you will marry me at once?'

'I mean,' she said, as he took her to his bosom, 'that I am yours in life and in death.'

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